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ॐ अविघ्नमस्तु, शुभमस्तु, श्रीरस्तु ।

अष्टादशविद्यापारङ्गतस्य, चतुष्षष्ठिकलाकुशलस्य, जितारिषद्वर्गस्य, शमदमादिसाधन-षट्कसंपन्नस्य, शिष्यवत्सलस्य, ज्ञानभारनप्रस्य, बहुभाषाप्रवीणस्य, सत्यसन्धस्य, धर्मकामस्या-लोलुपस्याश्रितजनकल्पवृक्षस्य, विद्याविनोदशीलस्य, विद्वन्मानसराजहंसस्य, वैयाकरण-सार्वभौमस्य, शब्दब्रह्मणि निष्णातस्य, नवनवोन्मेषशालिशेमुषीविभवविराजमानस्य, दिगन्तविश्रान्तयशोविभूषितस्य, लोककल्याणरतस्य, सकलबुधजनवन्दितपादारविन्दस्य, वेदान्तरहस्यज्ञशिरोमणेरकारणकरुणावरुणालयस्य, धिषणानिर्जितधिषणस्य, गीर्वाण-सारस्वतसाम्राज्यपट्टाभिषिक्तस्य, स्वदेशविदेशविख्यातनामधेयस्य, भर्तृहरिविरचित-वाक्यपदीयनामकमहाग्रन्थसंपादनकुशलस्य, बहुग्रन्थरचनाप्रकटितवैदुष्यस्य, बहुश्रुतस्य, शोत्रियस्य, सर्वशास्त्रतत्त्वज्ञस्य, सुगुणरत्नाकरस्य, कुशाग्रबुद्धः, पुरुषसिंहस्य, श्रेयस्कामस्य, धीरोदात्तस्य, नरशार्दूलस्य, व्यूढोरस्कस्य, वृषस्कन्धस्य, दयामयस्य, दाने कर्णस्य, गाम्भीर्यं समुद्रस्य, समुन्नतौ हिमालयस्य, वाचि सुराचार्यस्य, पुरुषर्षभस्य, धर्मरक्षणतत्परस्य, महाभुजस्य, चतुर्विधपुरुषार्थसाधनदक्षस्याविलष्टकर्मणः, अनन्यसाधारणप्रज्ञस्य, सदाचार-संपन्नस्य, स्मेरवदनस्य, ब्रह्मिषिगणपूजितस्य, प्रशान्तमूर्तेः, कुलदीपकस्य, ग्रन्थस्य, रिमत-विकसितमुखकमलस्योत्फुललोचनस्य, विद्वज्जनजेगीयमानयशोनिचयस्य, सर्वदेवगण-संस्तूप्यमानगुणगणस्य, सदा प्रहृष्टवदनस्योदारस्वभावस्य, परोपकारसंपादितपुण्यनिचयस्य, सर्वविद्याचार्यसंश्लाघ्यमानप्रज्ञावैभवस्य, संक्रान्तसकलकलाकलापस्य, कलाप्रपूर्णस्य, पाणिडत्यप्रभाभासितदिङ्मण्डलस्य, सर्वलिपिसर्वदेशभाषासंपादितकौशलस्य, सकललोक-हृदयनयनानन्दजननस्वभावस्य, त्रिभुवनविलोभनीयपीयूषरसरूपवाग्रसस्य, गुरुशुश्रूषा-रतबहुसंख्याकशिष्यगणपरिवृत्तस्य, सुरभारतीसुधापानसमुत्थितमहानन्दमहासागरस्नान-पूतगात्रस्य, विष्णिन्मूर्धन्यस्य, जर्मनीदेशवास्तव्यस्य, रौवंशोदधिपूर्णचन्द्रस्य, विलहेत्सनाम-धेयस्य, डॉक्टरूपाधिभूषितस्याचार्यवर्यस्य, पञ्चषष्ठितमजन्मदिनमहोत्सवसमये तच्छिष्ठ-भूतेन डॉक्टरूपाधिभूषितेन प्रसिद्धे पेरिनामके पण्डितवंशे संभूतेन सर्वेभवरशर्मणा विरचितानि पद्यरत्नानि—

रौवंशोदधिपूर्णन्दो विलहेत्सनाम युधीवर ।

पञ्चषष्ठितमे तेऽद्य शुभे जन्मदिनोत्सवे ॥१॥

ब्रह्मा विष्णुर्नीलकण्ठः सर्वे देवगणास्तथा ।

पुष्पवृष्टिं प्रहर्षेण कुर्वन्त्युत्फुलमानसाः ॥२॥

Michael Witzel

The Case of the Shattered Head*

1. The dialogue of Yājñavalkya and a number of opponents in the Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (Kāṇva version 3.1-9) is one of the more famous pieces of Upaniṣad literature. It is here that he, exceptionally, is questioned two times by a woman, Gārgī (3.6 and 3.8). She asks Yājñavalkya (BAU 3.6.1):

"As 'all this world' (the universe) is woven into the waters into what then are the waters woven?"¹

(*yad idam sarvam otam ca protam ca, kasmin nu khalv āpa otas ca protas ca?*)

Yājñavalkya answers: 'into the winds, the Antarikṣa-world, the Gandharva-, sun-, moon-, star-, gods-, Indra-, Prajāpati-world,' and finally: 'the Brahma-world.' When she insists and asks into which the Brahma worlds are woven, he warns her:

"'Gārgī, do not overask ('ask beyond') so that your head does not burst ('fly apart')! Really, you ask beyond the deity which is not to be asked beyond. Gārgī, do not overask.' Then Gārgī Vācaknavī fell silent.'"

(*Gārgī mātiprākṣī! mā te mūrdhā vyapaptat! anatiprāśnyām vai devatām atiprēchasi. Gārgī, mātiprākṣī! iti. - tato Gārgī Vācaknavy upararāma*

* This paper was first presented as a lecture at the Centre des Études Jaina et Bouddhistes, Paris, in December 1983. I take this opportunity to thank Prof. C. Caillat for her kind invitation to this and to other lectures at Paris. - Part of the legend treated in this paper has recently been discussed by I. Fiser, *Acta Orientalia*, 1984, p. 56-87: "Yājñavalkya in the Śruti tradition of the Veda."

1. Most probably the waters surrounding the earth and those flowing down from the night sky: Sarasvatī/Sindhu/Samudra, see Bull. Etud. Ind., 2, 1984, p. 213 sqq.

This passage usually is mistranslated: *mūrdha vi.pat* does not mean "the head flies off" but, obviously, *vi.pat* means "to fly apart, to burst".² What is intended can be seen in such passages as JB 2.393 § 164 or TS 7.6.5.2 where a leather pipe used to store water is described as bursting.³ Secondly, the verb form *vyapaptat* is an aorist which cannot be used in conjunction with the prohibitive particle *mā*. Even in late Vedic, *mā* always is used with the injunctive. One would, therefore expect *mā... *vipaptad*. We have to return to this problem later.⁴

At first sight, one may be lead to understand the passage quoted above, in terms of Western languages, as "to break one's head", an expression denoting "thinking deeply" about a difficult problem.⁵ It remains unclear, what this "flying apart" or "bursting" of one's head means, and how it could occur. I will here try to find out the exact meaning of this expression and also its wider background.

One thing seems certain, however: The bursting of one's head seems to be the effect of or, perhaps, the punishment of asking too many questions, the one directed 'beyond the brahman', towards the true nature of brahman. However, this actually is what the Upaniṣads are about, and yet Yājñavalkya warns Gārgī not to pursue her questions.⁶

-
2. I. Fišer, AO 45, 1984, p. 79, correctly translates "burst asunder" and criticises the older translations; with regard to the idiom, however, he simply states: "often used on similar occasions in the Upaniṣads".
 3. JB 2.393 § 164 (cf. PB transl. p. 95) *yo vai pūrṇa āvapati, vi vā vai tat patati, pra vā śiryate; TS 7.5.6.2 yáthā dṛtir úpanaddho vipātaty, evám ...*
 4. See K. Hoffmann, Inj. p. 98. Only in some late Up.s, in the Epic and in similar texts there is confusion with *na*; see ann. 81; cf. RV 10.95.15 *mā prā paptah* "do not throw yourself down (into a cleft)", in ann. 95.
 5. This indeed was our first idea, when A. Wezler and I talked about this, in 1970 or 1971. Subsequently, A. Wezler gave a talk (so far unpublished) on the history of discussion, at Tübingen University, of which he sent me a copy some time later which I recently, after my move to America, 'rediscovered'. The present article, however, was already written in outline in Dec. 1983 when I presented it as a lecture at Paris, at the Centre de Philologie Bouddh.-Jaina. This paper has now been altered and added to slightly. - It is difficult for me to estimate now how far I then had been influenced by A. Wezler's lecture. We both have come to the result that *atipṛch* means "to overask (in a discussion)". This is a technical term meaning "to ask beyond the limits of one's own knowledge".
 6. Falk, Upaniṣad, ZDMG 136, p. 79 sqq. understands it as: "bewirkende Macht".

2. If one compares this situation with others in the rest of the present Upaniṣad dialogue, it is notable that the questions are placed in the context of an open challenge.

In the present story, Janaka has begun a sacrifice and has invited many priests, among whom he wanted to find out the most learned one. Consequently, he set out a prize of one thousand cows with gold pieces bound to their horns. Of all the Kuru-Pañcāla Brahmins who had come from far away to Videha in order to take part in the sacrifice or the contest Yājñavalkya was so sure of himself that he dared to appropriate the prize immediately, even without entering into a dialogue. It is at this moment that the other Brahmins angrily challenge him. Interestingly, the challengers seem to be the best among the various groups of Brahmins, (and both Yājñavalkya's and their personalities require further study).⁷

In order to understand better and to define the conditions of the threat levelled at Yājñavalkya, a closer investigation must be made of the other Upaniṣadic passages which deal with the topic of the head of a discussant that is threatened to fly apart.⁸

As in the BĀU passage, insufficient knowledge is the cause of the threat.

TB 3.10.9.5 (< *KathB): A student of Atyamha Āruṇi was sent to Plakṣa Dayyāmpati to question him on the Sāvitra fire. When Plakṣa finally declares that the Sāvitra is based on the *prāṇa*, the student says:

"My teacher told me I should not ask beyond the *prāṇa*"
Plakṣa D. said:

"If you had asked beyond the *Prāṇa*, your head would have burst apart. And I shall (always) be better than your teacher, who has challenged me to discuss on the Sāvitra (fire)."

-
7. See below, ann. 77; and cf. L. Renou, Les relations du Śatapathabrahmaṇa avec le Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad et la personnalité de Yājñavalkya; Fišer regards the whole episode as artificial but overlooks that such contests took place quite commonly both in the early Vedic period (RV, AV) as well as in the later Vedic literature (ŚB etc.); see for example the story about Uddālaka Āruṇi among the Northerners at ŚB 11.4.1.9, - where there cannot be any question of "legend forming".
 8. For the art of discussion in general at the time of the Upaniṣads, see Ruben, Über die Debatten in den alten Upaniṣads, ZDMG 83, 1928 p. 238-255.

(... mā sma prāṇām átiprēccha, iti mācāryo 'bravīd iti hovāca brahma-cāri. sā hovāca plakṣo dāyyāmpātih: yād vāi, brahmacārin, prāṇām átya-prakṣyah (*atyáprakṣyah) mūrdhā te vyāpatiṣyat (*vyāpatiṣyat). ahám utācāryāc śréyān bhaviṣyāmi, yó mā sāvitré samāvadiṣṭéti.)⁹

Here, the discussion is clearly described as a challenge, even though it is acted out by a Veda teacher and the pupil of another one. An obvious challenge is also met with at ŚB 11.4.1.9: Uddālaka Āruṇi, driving around¹⁰ the land of the Northerners, was challenged by their Brahmins. He offered a gold coin which was the prize 'formerly', in order to "call out the timid for discussion". Uddālaka, after a secret discussion with one of the Northern Brahmins, Svāidāyana, had to concede insufficient knowledge and gave him the coin. Svāidāyana however, concealed it, apparently as to keep his gain secret, and told his friends, on his return from the discussion:

"Even if one was a Brahmin, a relative of a Brahmin, the head of the one who challenges him (Uddālaka) to a discussion (*upa.valh*) would fly apart' (yáthā brahmā brahmaputrō mūrdhāsyā vīpated, yá enam upaválheti). Uddālaka then came back to Svāidāyana, with firewood in his hands, and asked him for an explanation."¹¹

9. Correction of the text acc. to Dumont (Proc. Am. Phil. Soc. 95, No. 6, 1951, p. 639). See below for a further treatment of these incorrect forms; the present case is perhaps due to faulty Taitt. transmission of an original Kāṭha text, a part of the lost Kāṭhb.; Kāṭha texts generally are better transmitted than late Taitt. texts (TB/TĀ), see v. Schroeder/Bühler, SB Wien 1898: Die Tübinger Kāṭha-Hss., appendix.
10. Note that one "drives" to a *yajña* or discussion by chariot, as a challenge – certainly a reminiscence of an older time when one would interfere, during a race or ritual by driving close/into others' "territory"; cf. also the German saying "jemanden an den Karren fahren"); on *dhāv* see Bodewitz in IIJ 16, and cf. below § 6.d. on Sudakṣiṇa Kṣaimi).
11. Note the similarity of the formulation with that of Gārgī and Yājñavalkya, see below § 2 (b): BĀU 3.8.1. – ŚB 11.4.1 still speaks only about one gold coin that "formerly" was the prize, but normally in the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads, one gets about 100-1000 cows, sometimes also 500 horses, a mule driven chariot, and exceptionally, a wife, as the prize, see ŚB 11.3.1.4 (Janaka and Yājñavalkya: 100 cows); ChU 4.2.1 (600 cows, a golden chain, a mule chariot, and successively more: including a wife, the daughter of Jānaśruti; in discussion with Raikva); ŚB 11.4.3.20 (1000 cows: J. and Y.); BĀU 4.3.33 (1000 cows: J. and Y.); 4.1 (1000 cows and a large bull, repeatedly, J. and Y.); JB 1.25 (1000 cows and 500 horses: J. and several Brahmins). – cf. ann. 12, 16, and Renou, Les relations ... (ann. 7); Hauschild, Mélanges Renou, p. 354 sq.

Another version of this story occurs at GB 1.3.6 sqq. (cf. ŚB 11.4.1.1-8). As in ŚB, Svāidāyana pretends that Uddālaka was better than him only during a friendly disputation, under four eyes only (GB 1.3.8).

(tam ha paprāccha: kim esa gautamasya putra iti. esa brahmā brahma-putra iti hovāca. yad enam kaścid upavadetota mīmāniṣeta ha vā mūrdhā vā asya vīpated. prāṇā vainam jahur iti...)¹²

ChU 1.10.9: Uśāsti Cākrāyāṇa, who was so poor he had to eat *ucchiṣṭa* food, went to a Rājā's sacrifice and challenged the *udgātars*: "Prastotar, if you will sing the *prastāvā* (introductory 'praise' of a *sāman*) without knowing the divinity connected with the *prastāvā*, your head will burst apart!" (and likewise to two more priests). When the king agreed to pay him as much as the others, they repeat his threat (1.11.4, etc.) and ask him for teaching on the matter, Uśāsti always ends in saying: "If you had taken up the *prastāvā* (etc.) without knowing it, your head would (have) burst asunder – a f t e r you had been told so by me.

(prastotar, yā devatā prastāvam anvāyattā, tām ced advidvān prasto-syasi, mūrdhā te vīpatisyati (1.10.8) ... tām ced avidvān pratyahariṣyo, mūrdhā te vyāpatisyat tathoktasya mayeti, tathoktasya mayeti.) (1.11.9)¹³

A discussion resulting in the threat of a shattered head apparently has to be announced formally; this is stressed here by doubling the statement.

ChU 1.8.6: Three Brahmins hold a discussion on the *udgītha*. When one says that the *sāman* is heaven, the other says: "Your *sāman* is without foundation, Dālbhya. If someone would say now 'your head will burst apart,' your head would burst apart." – [The other one]: "Then let me ask it of you" ... [The same is repeated]

(apratiṣṭhitam vai kila te, Dālbhya, sāma. yas tv etarhi bruyān: mūrdhā te vīpatisyati, mūrdhā te vīpated iti. hantāham etad bhagavato vedāniti)

Here a friendly discussion, held without any threat, can be turned into a challenge immediately if an outsider (or, of course, one of the

12. See transl. in: Geldner-Pischel, Ved. Stud. II, 185; note that only one gold coin is given as a prize even in the very late GB 1.3.6 (where the tale is excerpted from ŚB but also added to).
13. The passage looks rather like a *satyakriyā*, see below ann.s 75 and 23.

participants who happens to know more) announces the insufficient knowledge of the other(s), saying "Your head will burst apart!"

ŚB 11.5.3.13: Śauceya Prācīnayogya came to Uddälaki Āruṇi for a disputation on spiritual matters. They discuss the Agnihotra ... "Verily, I did not know that" said (Śauceya). Śauceya, thus instructed, said: "Here are the logs for fuel; I will become your pupil, sir." (Uddälaka) replied: "If you had not said so, your head would have burst apart." (*yád evám nāvākṣyo, mūrdhā te vyapatiṣyat.*) (He then taught Śauceya.)

The GB version of this story (GB 1.3.14) differs slightly at the end: Śauceya Prācīnayogya came to Uddälaka Āruṇi for a discussion on the Agnihotra (see the transl. of Eggeling ŚB 11.5.3, Bodewitz, Agnihotra p. 183 sqq.). (Udd.) said: "Sir, as you have said, I approach you (sir) (for instruction)." (Śauceya) said: "If you had not said so, your head would have burst apart. But now, I will tell it to you so that your head will not burst apart."

(*evam evaitad: bho bhagavan, yathā bhavān āhopayāmi tv eva bhavantam ity. evam cen nāvākṣyo, mūrdhā te vyapatiṣyad iti. hanta tu te tad vakṣyāmi, yathā te na vipatiṣyatīti.*)

As in the other cases mentioned so far, the discussants who do not know the whole truth, have to give up. They have to state this clearly, and they even can approach the winner in the debate as pupils, with fuel wood in their hands. (It is well known that it is one of the many duties of pupils to collect fire wood for the teacher.)

The situation is similar at ChU 5.11-17: Five Brahmins discuss, in a friendly way, about the ātman and brahman and then go to Uddälaka Āruṇi to learn more. He fears not to know enough and joins them in going to Aśvapati Kaikeya, apparently a Kṣatriya, to learn more.¹⁴ They approach Aśvapati as pupils, with fire-wood in their hands, but he accepts them without a

14. Notably it is Uddälaka who knows only the 'lowest' part, the feet; for this concept, cf. that of the Śūdra originating from the feet of the Puruṣa RV 10.90, cf. DN 27.3. Note that Udd. feared not to be able to answer the brahmins at the outset, and had sent them on to Aśvapati. This looks like a rhetorical device on part of the Sāmavedins of ChU to put the famous ŚB teacher Uddälaka in a lower position; cf. below § 7, on Vidagdha Śākala and Yājñavalkya, and cf. ann. 19.

special initiation and asks one after the other about the ātman. Their answers are deemed insufficient. One of them understands heaven as the ātman *vaiśvāra*: Aśvapati answers: (5.12.2)

"But this one (which you explained) is only the head of the ātman", he said. 'Your head would have flown apart if you had not come to me (for my explanation, - which follows at the end, ChU 5.18 sqq.)!'"

(*mūrdhā tv eṣa ātmana iti hovāca. mūrdhā te vyapatiṣyad, yan māṁ nāgamiṣya iti*)

It is interesting to note that the other four Brahmins, who are said to know only the sight, the breath, the body, the feet of the ātman, are threatened individually:

"This is only the sight (breath, body, feet) of the ātman. You would have become blind / your breath would have left you / your body would have dissolved / your bladder would have split / your feet would have withered - if you had not come to me".

(... andho 'bhaviṣo / prāṇas ta udakramiṣyad / saṁdehas te vyasīryad / bastis te vyabhetsyad / pādau te vyāmlāsyetāḥ, yan māṁ nāgamiṣya iti)

This is, if I have seen correctly, the only case where insufficient knowledge has such diverse effects. Usually it is the head that flies apart.¹⁵

This kind of a discussion cannot be avoided if demanded by one of the people present at any occasion:

JUB 3.2.1 (cf. ChU 4.3.5-6): A brahmin (ChU: a *brahmacārin*) begged food of Saunaka Kāpeya and Abhipratārin Kākaseni who were being served food. They did not pay attention to him, thinking "who is he?" He (the brahmin) sung (a verse) to them, "One god swallowed up four magnanimous ones; who is he that world's keeper? Him, o Kāpeya, some do not know; (him), o Abhipratārin, settled down in many places." - Abh. said: "Stepping forward, answer this man. By you this man must be answered."

15. Cf. however, also the case of the Caraka and Yājñavalkya at ŚB 3.8.2. 24-25: The Caraka threatens Y. that his breath would leave him if he did not know a particular detail of the ritual, see StII 8/9, p. 172, ann. 112.

(... tau ho 'pajagau: mahātmanaś caturo deva ekaḥ - kas sa - jagāra, bhuvanasya gopāḥ; taṇ, kāpeya, na vijānānty eke; 'bhipratārin, bahudhā nivīṣṭam iti. - sa hovācābhipratārimān vāva prapadya pratibrūhiḥ. tvayā vā ayam pratyucya iti .)

Also, one cannot just pretend to know the answer; in that case, the competitors will not allow one to get away with it, see ŚB 14.6.1 = BĀU 3.1, where Yājñavalkya simply orders the driving away of the cows, the prize set out by Janaka (cf. ŚBM 11.6.3, JB 2.76). The threat to Yājñavalkya is repeated at BĀU 3.7.1. If one does not know the answer, the only honorable way out of the predicament is to become the pupil of the winner in the discussion, see above: TB 3.10.9.5; and cf. ŚB 11.5.3.13 (Uddālaka as pupil of Svaidāyana), ChU 5.11.7 (five Brahmins, including Uddālaka as pupils of Aśvapati Kaikeya).

After the extensive presentation of the examples dealing with the shattered head of a discussant, the evidence can be summed up:

- (a) The general context can now be described more precisely: two or more persons, almost exclusively men and mostly brahmins, challenge each other to answer certain questions of a ritual or spiritual nature; or, one man is challenged by a group of others. This may occur in a private or in public situation; often, it takes place in ritual context (see below).¹⁶
- (b) The discussion can be initiated in the form of an open competition. In this case, each of the participants is automatically challenged right from the beginning. Or it can develop between ritualists in the course of a friendly exchange of views, while "talking shop". In this case, the challenge has to be stated expressively.¹⁷

16. For the terminology, cf. already F. B. J. Kuiper, Old Indian verbal contest, IIJ 4 (1960), reprinted in his book, Ancient Indian Cosmogony, Delhi 1983, pp. 151-215: *vivāc*, *a-vivākya* day, *upa.valh.*; at ŚB 11.4.1.9 Uddālaka Āruṇi is challenged by the Northerners, for a piece of gold and this is called a "former" custom, see ann. 11; for *sam.vad*. see above ann. 12; cf. above, *upa.vad* and cf. below, *samvāda*, *anu.sṭhā*, *ati.kṛ*, see ann. 72; these and other terms of the *brahmodya* and of the general rules for a discussion have to be treated separately, in more detail.

17. For other cases, occurring in *sattras*, see H. Falk, Bruderschaft und Würfelspiel. Untersuchungen zur Entwicklungsgeschichte des vedischen Opfers, Freiburg 1986, p. 35 sqq.

The actual challenge can be voiced quite forcefully; Gārgī, for example, does so in her second questioning of Yājñavalkya, at BĀU 3.8.1 sqq.: "I will ask this Yājñavalkya two questions. If he can answer them, nobody of you will overcome him in a disputation. If he cannot answer them, his head will burst." - 3.8.2: "I will approach you (Yājñavalkya) with two questions, like the son of a military leader (*ugra*) from Kāśi or Videha approaches, having strung his unstrung bow and two arrows in his hand (ready) to pierce his rivals".¹⁸

- (c) One cannot avoid such a challenge, cf. also above, JUB 3.2.1.
- (d) The challenge may be especially instigated by a prize, mostly gold, cf. for example, the tale of Uddālaki among the Madras, ŚB 11.4.1.1: "for in the time of our forefathers a prize used to be offered by chosen priests when driving about, for the sake of calling out the timid to a disputation." By the time of the disputation of Yājñavalkya with his opponents, a famous king like Janaka seems to have increased this reward ten thousand times: According to BĀU 3.1.1 at least, he presents a thousand cows, each with ten *pādas* of gold bound to their horns. Is this increase in value of the prize due to the relative wealth of Videha (which, according to ŚB 1.4.1.16, "now" is fit for agriculture, having been "sweetened" by the Brahmins with the help of sacrifices)? There may be, however, an element of exaggeration, as Fišer generally supposes for BĀU, for example, when Janaka gives away himself and his whole country to Yājñavalkya, see BĀU 4.4.23.¹⁹

18. Fišer, AO 45, p. 79 sq. regards this passage as an example of the Yājñavalkya legend being "already in full bloom" ... "The story continues in this unusually pompous style". The truth of the matter is that Gārgī quite appropriately expresses her challenge in warrior-like terms, which only fits the challenge to a discussion during which one may lose "face", - and more, - Cf. also such treatments of Yājñavalkya as that of K. Werner, On the philosophy of Yājñavalkya, Bhar. Vidya 11, 166-177.

19. Or is it just śākhā propaganda, see ann. 88 (cf. ann. 14), and in connection with Śākalya and Yājñavalkya, § 7; - cf. already Deussen, transl. 60 Up.s, p. 427, on Janaka; he is a legendary king already at BĀU 2.11 and KU 4.1; - cf. also Mahājanaka (and Mahākosalā) in the Pāli sources see Franke, Kl.Schr. p. 379 (Janaka as a famous king of old Mithilā). Nothing is known about his ancestors or position in history. One may, perhaps, compare Jānaśruti of ChU 4.1, the grandson of a Jānaśruta. The short form of this name would be Janakā. Note that Jānaśruti is described as "possessing śraddhā" and as distributing wealth etc., - which would make him a worthy continuant of Janaka's line. Cf. ann. 48.

(e) In the course of the discussion, participants who do not know the whole truth have to state this clearly, they must cease questioning, (see above, especially BĀU 3.1 sqq.), and thus declare defeat, or they must become the pupil of the winner; cf. also 11.4.1.9 (Uddālaka and Svaidāyana) ŠB 11.5.3.13, cf. ChU 1.10.11.

(f) The bursting of one's head is threatened as the effect of asking one question too many, that is to ask beyond the limits of one's own knowledge. It is not "wrong" to ask ultimate questions as such; but to do this with insufficient knowledge results in the formal pronouncement of the threat by the opponent. It can and, usually is, repeated to warn the challenger, see above and cf. also:

Praśna Up. 3.2: (Pippalāda speaks): "You ask questions that lead too far (*atipraśna*). You are the best Brahmin, therefore I will tell you ..."

(*tasmai sa hovacātipraśnān prechasi; brahmīṣṭho 'siti; tasmāt te 'ham bravīmi*).

(g) If the opponent cannot answer, he may be warned again, and usually "keeps his peace" then, in order to avoid the consequence of losing his head (see above, especially BĀU 3.1 sqq.).

(h) One is, however, not always required to announce one's secret solution of a problem in public; one may choose to reveal it to the opponent in private, as Yājñavalkya does at BĀU 3.2.13 (when they talk about *karma*), or as Svaidāyana does, when challenged by Uddālaka, at ŠB 11.4.1.3; 9. This merely underlines the fact that ritual and spiritual knowledge is secret, and normally, is to be taught only to special students, one's son, or to friends.

(i) On the other hand, one cannot just claim to be better than the rest. The Brahmins do not take this even from Yājñavalkya (BĀU 3.7.1 = ŠBM 14.6.7.4). He is threatened that his head would split if he should not know a particular secret, but would, in spite of this, actually assert, 'I know it, I know it!' ("as everyone would say":)

(*tac cet tvam, Yājñavalkya, sūtram avidvāṁs tam cāntaryāmīṇam brahma-gavīr udajase, mūrdhā te vipatiṣyatīti; veda vā aham, Gautama, tat sūtram tam cāntaryāmīṇam iti. yo vā idam kaścid (kāś ca ŠB) brūyād: veda vedeti. yathā vettha, tathā bruhīti!*) cf. also 1.11.4-9.

Mere brazen assertion does not suffice; one must be able to prove one's knowledge.

It will have become obvious by now that the texts speak about a set of general rules of discussion, rules of challenge and defeat. One can enter such a contest whether one indeed does know the ultimate answer or not, but one has to stop short of asking the "last question": - in other words, one is not allowed to ask (*prech*) beyond (*ati*) the limit of one's own knowledge.

Of course, the one entering such a discussion is not in a position to foresee whether he might be the winner or the loser. The opponent, after all, may turn out - even if he is a Yājñavalkya - not to be as learned as one rumours him to be ... In such a case, the stronger, victorious opponent will soon notice that the challenger cannot answer the "last question" as well as he himself would be able to do if asked for, - and therefore, he warns the opponent: "Do not overask, so that your head might not burst!"²⁰

Conceding defeat in a discussion has, of course, the social effect of clearly stated and admitted superiority, of gaining and losing 'face' among one's fellow brahmins and in the tribe at large. This is a point to which we will have to return later.²¹

On the other hand, however, one gets the impression, incidentally, of an empty threat: Yājñavalkya (and others, like Svaidāyana at ŠB 11.4.1) apparently do not wish to be (openly) asked about their own specific secret insights or speculations. When pressed for an answer, they just take the challenger apart and instruct him in secret.²²

20. For Uddālaka as a loser see ŠB 11.4.1.

21. Cf. below, RV passages on *brahmodya*, on wrong accusation and on poetry contests, cf. ann. 101; note the expression "to make someone one's leader" in poetry.

22. Similarly Uddālaka at 11.4.1, or BĀU 3.2.13: Yājñavalkya and his opponent Ārtabhaṅga talk about *karman*.

Normally only well known – though technically complicated – questions are allowed (and even the section treated here at length, BĀU 3.1-9, is full of them). Yet, there are a few passages of another nature, i.e. those that do not involve a *brahmodya* or ritual discussion. Yet still they indicate that danger to one not knowing the proper answer. In such cases, however, the questioning concerns the proper procedure or ritual and its secret, esoteric meaning known only by brahmins initiated into the sacred lore and having undergone a long period of training in the śrauta ritual and the special consecration (*dīkṣā*).

One example has already been given above: lack of knowledge about the *devatās* connected with certain ways of singing the Sāmans results in having one's head split, in death (ChU 3.10.9-11). In the same way, ŚB 3.6.1.23 clearly threatens this outcome, if one – not knowing the consequences – eats in the Sadas shed of the Soma (Agniṣṭoma) ritual; the Sadas is reserved for the gods:

"(Therefore) the cart-shed belongs exclusively to the gods; hence neither food nor drink is taken therein; because it belongs exclusively to the gods; and were anyone either to eat or drink therein, his head would, verily, fly apart."

(*tasmād tātra nāśnanti nā bhakṣayanti niṣkevalyam hy etād devānām. sā yo ha tátrāśniyād vā bhakṣayed vā mūrdhā hāsyā vīpated*)

A similar case, though in a mythological setting is found at GB 2.1.2. This section deals with the *prāśitra* offering which was to be eaten by various gods. They all suffered. Bhaga lost his eyes, Pūṣan his teeth, etc. The gods transferred it to Āṅgiras. (This section dealing with Āṅgiras is only found in GB, certainly because of the Atharva-Āṅgiras origin of the AV texts; cf. introd., ed. Gaastra, p. 34, for parallels in AB, KB, TS, ŚB.) Āṅgiras ate of it:

"His head burst apart. The sacrifice fashioned him."
(*tasya śiro vyapatat. tam yajña evākalpayat.*)

During the performance of a ritual one can even put one's ritual knowledge to a test: BĀU(K) 1.3.24 = ŚB 14.4.1.26 24:

"Therefore Brahmadatta, son of Cikitāna, said, when drinking the King (Soma), 'The King (Soma) shall split the head of this one (= me), if Ayāsyā Āṅgirasa sang (the *udgītha*) with other means; he (too) sang the (*udgītha*) only with speech and breath.'"

(*taddhāpi Brahmadattaś Caikitāneyo rājānam bhakṣayann uvacāyam tyasya rājā mūrdhānam vipātayatād , yad ito 'yāsyā Āṅgiraso 'nyenodagāyad iti. vācā ca hy eva sa prāñena codagāyad iti.*)²³

This is the only passage so far that actually names the one who executes the threat: it is a god, King Soma, who is, next to Agni, one of the two gods that are visibly present on the offering ground.

The conditions for the ominous threat involving the splitting head can now be redefined:

- insufficient knowledge on part of one of the contestants and lack of admission of this fact
- perpetration of 'forbidden' actions (based on lack of knowledge)
- asking of 'forbidden questions' (i.e. those beyond one's knowledge: *anatiprāśnya*).

An important factor is this one: if someone challenges the other contestant with the announcement that his head would split, should he act in such and such a way, it will actually happen. This looks like one of the well-known *satyakriyā*'s (*saccakiriya*), the truth (*satya*) that is unknown to the other party being the secret, esoteric knowledge about facts of ritual or mythology, etc.²⁴

3. Obviously, the apparently empty threat was quite effective with an Upa- niṣad time audience, for usually nobody dares to question beyond the point which had just been declared not to be asked beyond (*mātiprākṣṭh*) or to be *anatiprāśnya*. The one, and it is only one person, who actually dared to do so, Vidagdha Śākalya, promptly died shortly after he lost in such a discussion – a case to which we will have to return.

23. 'This one' = 'me', here expressed by *tya-*, but note, Zimmer IIJ 28, 1985, p. 192 sqq. – The passage again looks like a *saccakiriya*.

24. Note KB 27.1, the 10th day of Daśarātra (ends the 12th month of a one year Sattra): "The 10th day is that which is above in the sky; it is not to be explained, as nobody knows this (the heaven). 'Let me not explain ignorantly.' (*ned avidvān vibravāñiti*).

How can this be understood? In a period, where the ultimate question is put in so many ways, albeit by solitary speculation and subsequent secret teaching to selected pupils, at a time when Brahmins usually got, for answering questions about the *brahman*, at least a gold piece, and when Yājñavalkya receives 1000 cows with gold pieces bound to their horns, or is reported as having received even the whole of the Videha land from King Janaka, - in this period merely asking a spiritual question beyond one's own knowledge remains not only forbidden but is inherently dangerous.

Now, we are not told exactly how Vidagdha Śākalya died; so we must look for more incidental information concerning the threat of the shattered head viz. of splitting the head. One such circumstance could be: The "splitting headache" which not only men, as we all know, but even the gods can contract in a certain stress situation:

VādhB 4.75 tells of a particular Ṛṣi who performed a sacrifice behind the Gārhapatya fire.²⁵

"His (magical power of accumulated) heat went to Indra who was in the third heaven. Addressing (Agni) Jātavedas, he said: 'Jātavedas, my head aches somehow (*iva*, to a certain, i.e. here:, to a great extent)!'"

(*tasya hendram tṛtyasyāṁ divi saṁtam] tapo jagāma. sa jātavedasam āmantryamāṇa uvāca: jātavedah, śiro me rujatīveti ... - no hi te tad evaitad rujatīveti.*)²⁶

Here, it is the magical power of a Ṛṣi which - similar to the well-known Mahābhārata legends - induces even a god to feel a headache. Can it be that a similar power, that of an unspoken, unknown truth which is known, however, to someone else, e.g., to one's adversary in dispute or in sorcery, induces such a 'splitting headache'?²⁷ In sorcery, such an occur-

rence is not unheard of: a particular rite can produce - strange as it may sound to us - any number of symptoms - if only the person who is to be affected actually knows of the spell.²⁸ In Africa, for example, spells of this kind have been reported to result in the death of a person within hours: this is due to heart failure, which of course can only occur after the threatened person had got to know of the spell.²⁹

The stereotype warning of the Brāhmaṇa and Upaniṣad texts of this effect could point to a similar belief: If one dares to ask 'too far', one's head will split apart - at first, perhaps, by severe headache when trying to think of an answer, and subsequently, after the inevitable death caused by heart failure, - it will split in reality, i.e., when the body is burnt during cremation: Then the bones of the head will crack along the fissure lines of the fontanel.³⁰

4. Such an explanation would seem rationalistic; it takes into account what we know about sorcery and the belief in magic, yet it does not - I am afraid - solve our problem. The one case where actual death is reported i.e. the one of Vidagdha Śākalya, remains mysterious.

While the mere threat of death is usually sufficient in the Upaniṣads to deter anyone from asking too far, here the threat alone does not suffice. Śākalya, though properly warned by Yājñavalkya, asks the question 'beyond the deity', the one "not to be overasked" (*anatiprāśnyam*), and promptly dies. The passage is worth a closer look. It occurs in 4 versions out of (theoretically) 5, including the so far unedited, accented version of BĀUK. Actually available in print are: ŚBn 11.6.3.11, JB 2.77 (cf. Oertel, JAOS 15, pp. 238 sqq., Lokesh Chandra, ed. JB II 1-80, Nagpur 1950), ŚBM 14.6.9.28, BĀUK 3.9.26:

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25. VādhBr. 6.75: p. 190 sqq.; cf. Oertel, Transact. Conn. Acad. Sc. XV, p. 180.
26. Cf. the similar expression at AB 6.24.4: *vajrena ... vācaḥ kūṭena ... virujyā; hrdayo me tapati*.
27. That inspiration (by Agni) could be described in similar terms is evident at RV 6.9.6: *vī me kārnā patayato, vī cāksur, vidāṁ jyōtir hrdayā dhitam yāt, vī me mānas carati dūrādhiḥ. kīm svid vakṣyāmi, kīm u nū maniṣye*.
28. If a sorcerer is really clever, he can 'send it back', see Bloomfield, The Atharvaveda and the Gopatha Brāhmaṇa, p. 68: *kṛtyāpratiharaya*.
29. Observe that this concept is actually known to modern "sorcerers", the Atharvavedins of Orissa: They told me (Summer of 1983), quite accidentally, that "nowadays our magic does not work: people do not believe in it any more."
30. Note the medieval and modern custom of smashing Yogis' heads before burial in the ground; they are not cremated, see Sprockhoff, Sannyāsa, 62, cf. ann. 1c7.

ŚB 11 (Yājñ.) sá hovāca: anatipraśnyám mā devátām átyaprākṣiḥ
 JB (Yājñ.) sa hovācānatipraśnyām vai mā devatām atyaprākṣiḥ

ŚB 14 (Yājñ.) tām tvaupaniṣadām pūruṣam pṛecchāmi. tām
 cén me ná vivakṣyási, mūrdhā te vīpatiṣyatiti.
 BĀUK (Yājñ.) tam tvaupaniṣadām puruṣam pṛecchāmi. tam
 cen me na vivakṣyasi, mūrdhā te vīpatiṣyatiti.

ŚB 11 purētithyái mariṣyasi. ná té 'sthīni canā gr̄hān prāpsyantīti.
 JB puraitavatithyai martāsi. na te śarīrāṇi cana gr̄hān prāpsyantīti.

ŚB 14, BĀUK - -

ŚB 11

JB -

ŚB 14 tām ha Śākalyó ná mene. tásya ha mūrdhā vīpapāta.
 BĀUK tam ha na mene Śākalyah. tasya ha mūrdhā vīpapātā-

ŚB 11 sá ha tāthaiva mamāra.

JB tad dha tāthaivāsa. sa ha tāthaiva mamāra.

ŚB 14, BĀUK - -

ŚB 11 tásya hāpy anyám mányamānāḥ parimoṣiṇo 'sthīny ápajahruṣ.
 JB tasya hāpahāriṇo 'nantareṇa śarīrāṇy apajahrur,

ŚB 14 tásya hāpy anyán mányamānāḥ parimoṣinó 'sthīny ápajahruḥ.
 BĀUK -pi hāsyā parimoṣiṇo 'sthīny apajahrur,

ŚB 11 tāsmān nōpavādī syād.
 JB anyan manyamānāḥ. tasmād u ha nōpavaded.

ŚB 14 (átha ha Yājñavalkya uvāca:
 BĀUK anyan manyamānāḥ. (atha hovāca:

ŚB 11 utá hy ēvaṇvīt pāro bhavati.
 JB api hy evaṇvit paro bhavatīti³¹

ŚB 14 brāhmaṇā bhagavanto, yó vah kāmāyeta, sa mā pṛechatu ...
 BĀUK brāhmaṇā bhagavanto, yo vah kāmayeta, sa mā pṛechatu ...

Translation:

ŚB11/JB He (Yājñavalkya) said: "You have asked me beyond the deity which is not to be questioned beyond."

ŚB14/BĀUK Yājñavalkya said: "I ask you about the secret *puruṣa*. If you will not explain it to me, your head will burst apart."

ŚB11/JB You will die before the day so-and-so. – Not even your bones will reach your home."

ŚB 14, BĀUK -

ŚB11 Śākalya did not think so (did not know it.) His head burst apart.

JB -

ŚB14/BĀUK Śākalya did not think so (did not know it). His head burst apart.

ŚB 11 - He died just that way.

JB That was just so. He died just that way.

ŚB14,BĀUK -

ŚB11 And robbers took away the bones, thinking them to be something else.

JB And robbers immediately / afterwards took away his bones, thinking them to be something else.

ŚB14/BĀUK And robbers took away the bones, thinking them to be something else.

ŚB11/JB Therefore one should not be someone who speaks badly about (another person, one should not insult).

ŚB14 Then Yājñavalkya said:

BĀUK Then he said:

ŚB141JB For someone who knows thus (about the *puruṣa*), becomes superior."

ŚB 14 "Brahmins, Sirs, who of you should wish, he may question me ..."

BĀUK "Brahmins, Sirs, who of you should wish, he may questions me ..."

31. Note the curious *iti* at the end of the JB version. Is this an indication that the passage had been taken over from another text, probably ŚB?

The Upaniṣad (BĀUK, ŚB 14) version is clearly later;³² its end (3.9.28) consists of memorial verses! The older Brāhmaṇa version (ŚB 11 / JB) is interesting as it only speaks of dying very generally; this is to take place on a certain day. Both versions, however, agree in reporting an actual death, – having taken place, perhaps, as robbers are mentioned, somewhere in the wilderness (*aranya*).³³ They happen to come across Śākalya's bones which obviously were already picked clean by animals. Why the robbers carry them off remains mysterious. – Why should anyone carry off the bones of a dead person which one (accidentally?) comes across?³⁴ – Better perhaps is the explanation of Śāṅkara: robbers carried away even the bones of Śākalya while they were taken home by his pupils for the funeral rites. He argues: "Why? 'mistaking them for something else', that is: 'treasure in them'. An earlier story is referred to here: In the Aṣṭādhyāyī (= ŚB book 11) ..." etc.; Śāṅkara then quotes from the variant of the legend found at ŚB 11.6.3.

Already in the older ŚB version Yājñavalkya threatens Śākalya to die before a certain day: he probably predicts the death to take place before the next full moon or new moon.³⁵ During this period, there was enough time for the curse to take effect psychosomatically, while Śākalya was on his way, returning to his home; it could have caused heart failure. I suspect, however, that all of this has other backgrounds.

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32. Cf. already Deussen, 60 Up.s, and now, Fišer AO 45, p. 74 sqq., p. 78.
33. On robbers, typically found in the wilderness (*aranya*), see W. Rau, Staat und Ges. p. 98: *āvyādhīn*, *kuluñca*, *taskara*, *paripanthin*, *parimosin*, *prakṛnta*, *malimlu*, *muṣnat*, *selaga*; a troop of robbers: *āvyādhīni* (*senā*); cf. also ŚB 13.2.4.2: "*r̥kṣṭikāḥ*, *puruṣavyāghrāḥ*, *parimosīna*, *āvyādhīnyas*, *tāskarāḥ*" "ogres, man-tigers, thieves, murderers, robbers", dto. at TB 3.9.1.3.4; – for robbers in RV see e.g. 10.85.2.
34. The words used in the four versions of the text, as given above, do not mean, incidentally, "wild, carnivorous animals" or something the like, but "robbers, highwaymen"; see preceding note.
35. Note that the word *itithi* "such and such day" is used. This could mean that even the redactors of ŚB (JB) no longer knew the actual words of Yājñavalkya or that they regarded the actual wording of a legend as immaterial; this is more likely, cf. the Caraka quotations (StII 8/9, p. 172-177), the doubling of passages in BĀU 3, etc. – For on *itithi-*, *etāvathithi* see Wackernagel-Debrunner, Ai.Gr. II 2, § 535 b, § 211 (*etāvatitha-* is "unbelegt"), Lokesh Chandra, ed. JB II, 1-80, p. 103 ann. 15; cf. also Eggeling on the ŚB passage.

5. As often, it is the early Buddhist texts which provide more detailed, and very useful information. The Pāli texts, which have been composed only shortly after the end of the late Vedic period, frequently describe in lively and graphic detail what is only alluded to in the Vedic texts, which were, after all, composed by Brahmins for Brahmins: one did not have to explain ritual matters of everyday occurrence or of common knowledge to one's fellow Brahmins or to *brahmacārin* students when discussing, explaining or teaching the ritual, undertaken, apparently, in 'classroom' sessions on the offering ground itself. – There are a number of instances where "the splitting of the head" is described in more detail in the Buddhist canon than in the Brahmanical texts:

The young Ambatṭha pretends, among his peers, to be of high birth, while his ancestors were born of a slave girl of the Sakka king Okkaka (Ikṣvāku). The Buddha explains this and questions him about his ancestry (DN 3.1.20):

"'Amaṭṭha, now this *sahadhammika* question is put before you ('reaches you'); it has to be answered without passion (*akāma*). If you will not answer it, or if you will answer something else, (as if having been asked) with another (question), or if you will (remain) silent, or if you will go away, your head will burst asunder into seven pieces at once.'

(*Ayam kho pana te, Ambatṭha, sahadhammiko pañho āgacchati, akāma vyākātabbo. sace na vyākarissasi, anñena vā anñam paṭicarissasi, tuṇhi vā bhavissasi, pakkamissasi vā, ethh'eva te sattadhā muddhā phalissati*)

Ambatṭha is asked two times, but keeps quiet. The Buddha then warns him: 'If one, having been asked the *sahadhammika* question by the Tathāgata three times, does not answer, then one's head will burst into seven pieces at once.'

(*Yo kho, Ambatṭha, Tathāgatena yāva tatiyakam sahadhammikam pañham puṭṭho na vyākaroti, etth'ev'assa sattadhā muddhā phalissatīti.*)

"At that moment, the Yakṣa Vajrapāṇī, having taken a large metal hammer, was (appeared) above Ambatṭha in the air, (with the intention to kill him if he did not answer, thinking: *sahadhammikam pañham puṭṭho na vyākarissati, etth'ev'assa sattadhā muddham phālessāmiti*) ... Only the Buddha and the young Ambatṭha saw the Yakṣa Vajrapāṇī."

(tena kho pana samayena Vajirapāṇī yakkho mahantam ayokūṭam ādāya, ... Ambatṭhassa mānavassa upari vēhāsatthito hoti ... Tam kho pana Vajirapāṇīm yakkham Bhagavā c'eva passati Ambatṭho ca mānavo.)

Out of fear, Ambatṭha then gives in publicly and agrees with the Buddha's description of his ancestry.³⁶

In a similar incident (DN 5.21), the Brahmin Kūṭadanta does not agree with the Buddha's explanation of 'true sacrifice' (i.e. that made without offerings of animals), but he does not venture to present a counter-argument and remains silent. The other Brahmins ask him why he does not agree with the Buddha. He answers:

"It is not, Sirs, that I do not accept as well-spoken the well-spoken words of the Saṃāṇa Gotama; - the head of the one who does not accept the well-spoken words of the Saṃāṇa Gotama as well-spoken would burst. But, Sirs, this is what (troubles) me ..."

(... muddhā pi tassa vipateyya yo saṃāṇassa Gotamassa subhāsitam subhāsitato nābbhanumodeyya.)

Kūṭadanta has to agree, as he cannot state another truth; consequently, if he would openly challenge the Buddha, his head would burst.

In a later text, the Mahāvastu, (ed. Senart, vol. 3, p. 114.12) it is sufficient to let a person's head burst into seven pieces if the Buddha stands up in order to greet him. In the present instance, this is why the Buddha avoids to greet his father in this way after a long absence from home.

(nāsti ca so satvo vā satvakāyo vā yasya tathāgate pratyupasthikante na saptadhā mūrdhnaṃ sphaleyyā)³⁷

In the Suttanipāta, a Brahmin challenges another one to give him some food:

"If you do not give to me, who asks you, may your head split into seven pieces on the seventh day!"

36. For the rules governing such discussions see M. Hara, Mittabi, ['Three times'], Bukkyō kyōri no kenkyū, Tamura Yoshirō hakase kanreki kinen ronshū, Tokyo 1982, pp. 527-543.

37. Cf. also Mv, Vol. 2, p. 26.11 saptadhā asya mūrdham sphateyati (of a goddess!), cf. transl. p. 23.

(SN 5,983 sqq.: sace me yācamānassa bhavam nānupadassati, sattame divase tuyham muddhā phalatu sattadhā)³⁸

And in the Dhammapada Comm. 3, (vol. 1 p. 41), in the story of Tissa Thera, one ascetic curses another one in a similar way: "The sun with its thousand rays and hundreds of flames, which is the dispeller of darkness, when it rises in the morning, may split your head into seven pieces." Note that here it is the sun, similar to the Yaksā of the earlier texts, which carries out the threat. In the present case, the curse had to be revoked voluntarily; even a strong intervention by the king did not help.³⁹

Against this background the few similar references from the Brāhmaṇa texts gain special importance. It is especially the wording of DN 3.1.2b that is closely matched that of a late⁴⁰ Vedic text, JB 1.46. The passage speaks about the way to heaven by a deceased:

38. The period of seven days looks as if it had been inspired by the seven pieces the head splits into, but cf. Yājñavalkya's threat towards Śākalya: he will die on "such and such a day", i.e. after a certain number of days, most probably 7, 14, 21, or 30 days.
39. Cf. The Dhammapada Comm. of Buddhaghosa, transl. by the Dept. of Pali, Rangoon Univ., p. 14 sqq. - This case again looks very much like the usual saccakiriyā; cf. also Dhammapada Comm. ed. 1, p. 17, 24: "then my head must split into seven pieces" sacāham ... santikam na gamissāmi, muddhā me sattadhā phaleyyā; Av., emend. Speyer: niyatam devasya saptadhā mūrdhānam sphālayāmi "I will cause to burst" (but MSS 3rd sing. Cf. also DN 3.1.21:1, p. 95, SN 2.1.9: 1, p. 50; typical saccakiriyās in these texts: Jāt. 1, p. 54; Jāt. 4, p. 320; Jāt. 5, p. 92; Fausböll, Ten Jat., Copenhagen, 1872, p. 94; Miln 157 satadhā vā sahassadhā vā(!); DhA 1.17 muddhā me sattadhā phaleyya. Dhammapada, Fausb. 1855, 87, 140; DhA 1.41 muddhā te phalatu satadhā; VvA 68; for adhipaṭeti, see Lüders, Phil. Ind. 179 sqq. (phal/phat). - There are a number of similar cases in the Epics as well: Mbh. crit. ed. 3.275.33 (3.16564) yadi [Rāvaṇo] hy akāmā āsevet striyam anyām api dhruvam, śatadhāsya phaled deha (v.l. mūrdhā) iti ukthah; furthermore: Mbh. 7.6265; Mbh. 3.1603 tasya mūrdhāsya āsadaya, paphala; Rām. 2.64.23 sqq. yady etad āśubham karma na me kathayeh svayam, phalen mūrdhā sma te, rājan, sadyah śatasahasradhāh, ... saptadhā tu bhaven mūrdhā munau tapasi tiṣṭhati; Rām. 7.26.56 yadā hy akāmān kāmārto bhavitā tadā (cf. Mbh. 3.275.33!).
40. It comes from a later part of Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa, see Bodewitz, tr. JB 1.1-66, p. 9 sq.; repeated at: The daily Evening and Morning Offering (Agnihotra), Leiden 1976, p. 5 sq.

"To him one of the seasons, who holds a hammer in his hand, having come down along ray light, asks him: 'Who are you, man?' In case he knows something, he may withhold (his name). He (the Rtu deity) then kills him ('strikes forward! = 'strikes off his head') with his hammer."

(*tam ha ṛtūnām eko yah kūṭahasto raśminā pratyavetya, pṛcechati: ko 'si puruṣeti, sa kiṃ vidvān pravṛṇijyāt, tasya ha praharati*)⁴¹

A similar punishment occurs also at other occasions, see for example JB 2.269 sqq. § 151: Yavakrī Saumastambhi was about to sleep with an Apsaras when a Gandharva, a metal hammer in his hand, approached to punish him. (*atha hedam evāyah kūṭahasto gandharvo 'bhivicakrame ...*)

The *prāyascitti* for this was: Yavakrī must cut off (*śiraś chinddhi*) the head of all living beings of his father's trek (*grāma*, see Rau, Staat u. Gesellschaft im alten Indien, p. 54) before the next sunrise. However, according to some, a deaf carpenter killed Yavakrī (*prajaghāna*) when he saw him next morning at sunrise, going round and slaying everything, and therefore believed him to be mad; according to others, the Gandharva did so:

"People said: 'Surely, the Gandharva did kill him.' ('stroke forward [the head] of him.')"⁴²

(*bādhiraḥ ... takṣā ... sa evāya prajaghānety eke ... tasyodite sa eva gandharvah prajaghānety eke. yathā ha tu mamāra tathāsa. śaśvad dhāsyā sa eva gandharvah prajaghāna.*)

Obviously, in the late Vedic period and at the time when the Pāli texts were composed, someone to be punished by a supernatural being, like as Yakṣa, a Gandharva, or a Rtu-devatā, is killed by a blow of a metal

41. Bodewitz., tr. JB, p. 115 wrongly translates "strikes at him with his hammer".

42. It is interesting to note that the authors of JB do not know or do not want to say whether it was the village people (the carpenter) who killed him or the Gandharva. Is this already a deliberate mystification of killing a mad man?

hammer and his head splits (into seven pieces, as the Buddhist texts say).⁴³ In these passages killing is regarded as something quite real and is also described in realistic way - shattering someone's head with a hammer.

It is time now to return to the actual situation when the warning is pronounced: "don't ask beyond the deity/do not overquestion - or your head would split apart!" In the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads these warnings occur, as has been mentioned above, in a situation of 'theological' contest, or one of questioning on the fine points of the ritual or of other sacred/spiritual knowledge. A Brāhmaṇa challenges others or is being challenged himself to answer difficult questions on the ritual or on the *brahman*. We are, to some extent, informed about the history of such theological discussions:

From the Brāhmaṇa texts we know that they usually took place when a *yajamāna* or a group of people (i.e. in a pre-classical Sattrā, see H. Falk, Bruderschaft u. Würfelspiel, p. 32 sqq.) performed a larger (Soma) ritual or when a king undertook an elaborate ritual like the Aśvamedha⁴⁴ and was about to select his priests (see SB 11 and 14; cf. CHU 1.10-11). Later on kings like the famous Janaka of Videha are reported to have initiated such discussions to further "theological" or philosophical discussion. In some rituals, like the Aśvamedha, or the Sattras and their later counterparts, the Dvādaśāhas, they are part of the ritual itself. But these duels are so much older: Already the Rgveda contains some Brahmanical "riddles", *brahmodya*.

43. The seven pieces are those of the bones of the head which grow together only after birth, at the fontanelles. It is at these seams that the head splits in cremation; cf. below. - Note that killing with the blow of a hammer on the frontal bone is, according to SB 3.8.1.15, the "way of men" when slaying an animal at sacrifice, or that of the *pitrīs* (slaying it behind the ears); the "way of the gods" (- and therefore the only proper one in sacrifice -) is, as always, different from that of men: it is to strangle the victim, as to avoid obvious bloodshed. - Cf. also the "head of stone": of an enemy, to be killed, AB 8.28 (end), *asyāśmamūrdhā bhavati* ...

44. At SB 13.2.6.9: before killing of the horse; cf. the Yājñavalkya story, SB 11.6.3 (see above § 4, and § 7), cf. Kuiper, IIJ 4 (1960): The Ancient Aryan Verbal Contest, reprinted in: Ancient Indian Cosmogony, Delhi 1983, pp. 151-215.

6. They occur at several instances, notably in the long, enigmatic hymn RV 1.164; its verses 34–35 are one of the few (old) cases where question and answer were given. The whole situation, however, is referred to in details at RV 10.88.17–19: early in the morning, before sunrise, the Brahman and Hotṛ priests take their seats at the place of sacrifice and test each other with questions like: "How many fires are there, how many suns, how many dawns, how many waters then?" (cf. Geldner's commentary); compare also RV 10.166 and cf. PS 10.2, a *saptnaghna* hymn consisting of sorcery mantras directed against rivals. In later texts, like VS 23.45–62, the answers to such riddles are provided as a matter of convenience, cf. also the *brahmodya* at ŚB 13.2.6.9 sqq. where questions from VS 23.9 sqq. are answered in both in the Samhitā and in the Brāhmaṇa portion.⁴⁵

These "riddles" can – as far as their form is concerned – also be detected in other old Indo-European texts, for example the Zoroastrian Gāthās, as in Y.44, which contains questions addressed to Ahura (see below § 9 and cf. C. Watkins, Aspects of Indo-European poetics, 1982). The AV even contains charms intended for success in speech contests. AV 19.28 = PS(K) 13.11 = PS (Or.) 12.22, is a sorcery hymn against rivals in speech contests. Vs.4 runs:

"Split, o *darbha*, the head of our rivals, of our haters, o amulet, make their head fly apart, as the rising (sun) does (split) the skin of the earth." (Whitney)⁴⁶

(*bhindhi*, *darbha*, *saptnānām hrdayam dvīsatām*, *mane*, *udyān tvācam iva bhūmyāḥ śtra eśām vī pātaya*)

Such outbursts may be regarded as typically Atharvavedic, but reality hides behind this wish full of hate: this can easily be noticed in other ritual practices, and especially those of the "pre-classical" Vedic sacrifice; for example in the graphic descriptions found in the stray references

45. For the term and function of the *brahmodya*, see F. B. J. Kuiper, The Ancient Indian Verbal Contest (see ann. 44).

46. Cf. the similar statement in Śāṅkara's quotation, Brahmasūtrabhāṣya 3.3.25, from the lost *Paipp.-Āraṇyaka which included the *Paipp.Up.: *sarvam pravidhya, hrdayam pravidhya, dhamanīḥ pravṛjya, śiro 'bhi-pravṛjya tridhā viprktā-h> ity ādiḥ*; see Journal of the Nep. Res. Centre, 1, 1977, p. 143.

referring to the original Sattra rituals,⁴⁷ that exist both in the YV-Samhitās and in the extent Brāhmaṇas.

These Brāhmaṇa texts, however, also reveal, when searched conscientiously, a number of passages which shed more light on the whole context. They are quoted in extenso.

(a) JB 2.303: Some Brahmins want to offer for Janaka of Videha (with the *janaka-kratu* ritual, the 7 day rite).⁴⁸ He refuses:

J: "There was no Brahmin among you who was more learned in *brahman* (*brahmīyān*), and who did execute (*vy-a-dhāt*) this form of the sacrifice (*yajñakratu*). – Make me offer (as the *yajāmana*) with this well-known one (*kratu* of sacrifice) for me (*mā*). " – Br: "Yes". With that one they made him offer.

– (2.304) [details: In this way are these two forms of the *yajñakratu* explained.] – With that (ritual) Kratu Kārīrādi, who wished wealth (śrī) and food, offered for himself. ...

K.K.: "As such one (i.e. possessed of food, etc.), I will put from the middle of myself food!" As one who is 'food eating' (recipient of services and goods, see W. Rau, Staat und Gesellschaft, p. 32), I will become the best of my (relatives). – That will support me, who has been surrounded by food, throughout the year (*samvatsareṇa*). Then, I will step out towards the top (of the sky) (*varṣma*), to Śrī, to the (highest) back (of the sky, *prṣṭha*). – To him, a Brahmin said: "You (*bhagavān*) will live; because of food you will become the best of the relatives. But without head you will die." ... The Mahāvrata is the head of the sacrifice. K.K.: "If its (the *yajña*'s) head is cut off, one should conceal it under the armpits.^{48a} This does not hurt (read **kliśyati* "cause pain, torture"); it is cut off (only) this far / so long (i.e. off the body of the sacrifice)" he (Kratu Kārīrādi) said.

47. See H. Falk, Bruderschaft und Würfelspiel, Freiburg 1986, p. 30, sqq., and for the speech contest in the *sabha*, p. 94 sqq.; cf. the earlier treatment in ZDMG-Suppl. 1985.

48. Note, in contrast to Fišer's opinion (A0 45, p. 70 sqq.): the ŚB/BĀU tales are too artificial to be historical) that Janaka appears here quite naturally; at this instance he does not seem to be intentionally introduced as to show the progress of Upaniṣadic speculation; cf. ann. 19. For Kārīrādi see JUB 2.4.4.

48a. See K. Hoffmann, Aufs. p. 193; or are the bushes along the two sides of a river intended, cf. hiding the *pravṛgya* pots on an island of a river, Kathā 3.233:96.6: *guhāni patrāni ápi vā dvīpāni hareyuh*.

Br.: "Knowing ones will cut off his head" he said. And it was just like that: As long as Kratu Kārīrādi lived he was, as 'eater of food,' the best of his relatives. Without head, he died. But (?) knowing ones cut off his head, the fearsome ones (*bhāyakāḥ*). - (Br.:?) "That is the well-known auspicious form of the sacrifice, which he/one should offer (in one's own interest), with you (= J.?) as a spectator." (*iti*)⁴⁹

(*tam u ha Brāhmaṇa uvāca: yāvad jīviṣyaty annād eva śreṣṭha svānāṁ bhaviṣyati, viśīrṣās tv eva marteti. śiro vā etad yajñasya yan mahā-vratam. tad yathā śiraś chittvā, tad upapakṣayor upagūhet. tad vai na śliṣyati [v.l.: śviṣyati read: *kliṣyati??], tādṛg akṛd iti hovāca. jānanta evāya śiraś chettāra iti. tad dha tathaivāsa. yāvad dha Kratuḥ Kārīrādir jijīvānnāda eva śreṣṭha svānām āsa. viśīrṣās tv eva mamāra. jānanto ha tv evāya śiraś cicchidur bhāyakāḥ. sa haiṣa kalyāṇa eva yajñakratur yas tvainenānupadrāṣṭre yajeta.*)

(b) Even a comparatively late text of Anubhrāmaṇa type, VādhB 3.94, retains more direct statements:⁵⁰ When the horse that is offered in the Aśvamedha sacrifice is to be cut up and its skin is to be taken off, one leads a boy to the offering ground to do this:

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49. This passage has many difficulties: who is the *upadrāṣṭṛ*? - Probably it is J.; read *yas tv *enenopadrāṣṭre?* or *yas tvā+enenopadrāṣṭre yajety* cf. VādhB. 4, 28d, p. 136 *tasmān nu ha yajñasyāvid eva syān nopadrāṣṭā* "therefore one should be someone knowing the ritual, not only an onlooker. - However, it seems clear that indeed somebody's head was cut off - by knowing specialists! Note that in the Agnicayana sacrifice, heads still are cut off and interred, see already the opinion of Hillebrandt, Rit.Lit. Intr. p. 9 sq., and cf. Heesterman, The case of the severed head, WZKS XI, 1967, p. 22-43; repr. in his coll. articles: 'The Inner Conflict of Tradition', Chicago 1985; cf. below ann. 104 about the importance of this feature of Vedic ritual and myth.
50. For the date of the text (late Br., early Up. period), see author, StII 1, p. 93; for the translation of this passage, cf. Falk, Würfelspiel, p. 160.

"They lead, - crying, as if someone were going to die, - the (said) son of a noble sūta, a young, (specially) adorned boy who has not yet spilled semen, as cutter (*viśasitṛ*) of the horse. - One says: 'Who formerly used to take off (flay) the skin (of the horse) as the first, his head would fly apart.'

(ānayanty etān sūtaśreṣṭhasya putram kumāram asiktaretasam aśvasya viśasitāram alamkṛtya rudanto yathā mariṣyantam evān. yo ha smety āhur etasya purā prathama āchyati, mūrdhā ha smāsya vipatatis.)

Immediately after this, a legend follows which tells of happenings that apparently took place only three or four generations before the time of the author of the passage:

"When Keśin Maitreya offered an Aśvamedha, one lead (in the same way) the grandfather or great-grandfather of Ekayāvan Kāndama ... Dīrghatama Māmateya heard about this and said: 'Come, boy, I will tell you how you shall cut the horse, so that your head will not fly apart!'"

(*kumārehi, te'ham tad vakṣyāmi yathā tvam evāśvam viśasiṣyasi, no te mūrdhā vipatiṣyati.*)

Dīrghatama then told him to cut with the blade of a knife (and not the edge: thus Falk, differently from Caland), using a particular 6-verse hymn (TS 5.2.12). Somebody else would then approach him and tell him to cut in the traditional manner ... Exactly this happened: Someone came and said: "'Boy, what are you sitting there, torturing the horse? Thus indeed you will cut up!' And he took the knife and cut it open. His head flew apart. That, one should do in exactly this way."

(*kumāra, kim idam aśvam kliśnann āśso, itthān vā aśvam viśasiṣyasyāśi asim ādāyācachau. tasya ha mūrdhā vipapāta; tan nu haitad evam eva kuryāt*)

Again, somebody who does not know the correct way of ritual action gets killed, - a fact that has been noted already earlier. Here, this traditional practise is ascribed to a time only slightly before the end of the Brāhmaṇa/Upaniṣad period.

At the other passages too, and notably again in VādhB, it is mentioned that people, even accidental passers-by like merchants, are robbed for not knowing certain ritualistic details.⁵¹

51. See VādhB 3,75: AÖ 4, p. 180 on the Aśvamedha.

From the work of H. P. Schmidt we know that the R̄gvedic and other forms of the 'pre-classical' Vedic ritual generally involved straightforward and "visible" killing of victims, for example that of an animal victim which was decapitated at the offering pole.⁵² According to J. C. Heestermann, every pre-classical sacrifice even involved a fight between two parties.⁵³ However, there apparently were two (or more?) strands of traditions, namely the "violent" open killing of the victims and other, less obvious forms which co-existed even in R̄gvedic times. None superseded the other(s) for a considerable length of time. (One must not, of course, confuse this with metaphorical statements, such as the one about not killing the 'cow', i.e. poetry). That, also with other items of the ritual, several (regionally or clan-wise) divergent customs existed next to each other is well known (see Hillebrandt, *Ritualliteratur*, p. 16) and should not surprise; compare for example, that even today, there remain several types of 'violent' sacrifice next to each other with the Trobriand islanders, famous in anthropology. One of them is an outright 'bloody' sacrifice, while another form uses strangling to kill the victims.

The progress of the *ahimsā* concept (cf. L. Alsdorf, *Beiträge zum Vegetarismus* and H. P. Schmidt, *Mélanges Renou*) had succeeded in pushing the bloody sacrifice (viz. the less overtly killing of the victim by strangling) somewhat into the background by the time of the Upaniṣads and the Buddha, (cf. above § 5 on "true sacrifice"). However, this trend did

52. Falk (and others, incidentally) use the same terminology; "orthodox brahmans are those who succeeded in ordering the various sacrifices in a hierarchy, by eliminating all wild aspects, and in 'civilising' it", see Bruderschaft, p. 37 ann. 94. – Cf. H. P. Schmidt on R̄gvedic sacrifice in his article on *panthas*, IIJ 15, p. 1 sqq., see esp. p. 35; cf. in general: Heesterman, coll. articles: 'The inner conflict of Tradition', Chicago 1985.'

53. I wonder, however, how this could agree with the clearly stated aversion of priests, even in the RV, against overt killing, see the hymns about the horse sacrifice RV 1.162–163; contrast RV 8.101.15 with the metaphorical use of the word, "Do not kill the innocent cow, the Aditi": and cf. also *aghnya-* (see H. P. Schmidt, KZ 78, 1963, p. 1 sqq.; J. Narten, *Vedisch aghnyā und die Wasser*, Acta Orientalia Nederlandica, Leiden 1971, p. 120–134); note, that in YV, even the simple cutting of a blade of grass is avoided in ritual and must be done with care (at the "joints", as with animal bones): MS 4.1.1.:3.9 sq. KS 31.1, TB 3.2.2.1 (cf. TS 1.1.2, ŚB 3.6.4.10; for the animal protected while being cut by grasses: ŚB 3.8.2.12).

hold sway throughout history. Some Tantric forms of worship continue, for example in Nepal, with animal sacrifices (by decapitation but also by slowly letting the animal bleed to its death). Even human sacrifice was practised at Kāmākhyā in Assam and probably elsewhere (and it is rumoured to have occurred until recently at Harisiddhi, South of Kathmandu).

It has been known since long that the "classical" Vedic sacrifice excluded "overt" killing; this was done outside the offering ground by helpers, and executed no longer with an 'open' shedding of blood but by strangling. The victim had "to agree" or was "pacified".⁵⁴ Even in classical Vedic Śrauta ritual, however, one had to obtain a human and several animal heads which were inserted into the gradually built-up Agnicayana altar.⁵⁵

All of this is not too surprising when viewed against a background of such violent actions as the one reported at RV 10.171.2. "(Indra,) when you took off the head of the resisting Makha from its skin ..." (*tvāṁ makhásya dōdhataḥ śirō 'va tvacō bharah*). Apparently, the flaying of Makha's head is referred to here; his skull is brought by Indra, perhaps, to the sacrifice, cf. the following *pāda*: "You went to the house of the one who always (Suffix -in!) possesses Soma." (*ágachah somino grhám*). This reminds of many 'barbaric' customs, such as those of some Scythian and Germanic tribes who drank from bowls made from the heads of their enemies, or it reminds of the enigmatic skull sculptures found in Celtic temples in France. As for Vedic India one can hardly argue against the existence of similar customs, given the evidence of the texts themselves, even if they indicate a gradual "humanisation" of sacrifice.

(c) VādhB 4.108 (p. 229) reports that one formerly indeed offered a man as victim for Prajāpati at the time of building the altar of the Agnicayana, as for example Karṇājāya did. Dhārtakratava Jātūkarṇi (his

54. Cf. Oertel, *Euphemismen*, SB München 1942, Heft 8, p. 6–8; T. Goto on *labh/rabh*, Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū 24, 1976, p. 1015–1007 (= Engl. sect. p. 23–31). In the present day Nepal, the victim 'agrees' by shaking its head sideways (the human gesture for 'yes'), after some water had been poured on the head.

55. Heesterman, *The case of the severed head*, WZKS XI, 1967, p. 22–43; for other details see StII 8/9, p. 173, cf. VādhB 3.59 and ŚB 7.5.2.

descendant?) did not wish to eat the *idā* portion of the offered person;⁵⁶ the gods therefore exchanged man as a sacrificial animal with a horse (and 'retracted further from mankind'!). When his descendant, Rahahkṣita Jātū-karṇi, did not want to eat of it, they again changed the sacrificial animal to a hornless he-goat. By the time of the composition of VādhBh, one even let loose these animals, and offered only animal figures made of rice, barley or clay.

(d) While these comparatively late texts underline the existence of human sacrifice, or of the loss of the head as part of a ritual, a passage from JUB accidentally deals with the ritualistic or competitive discussion and the dangers to one's life involved: It mentions in some detail, but unfortunately does not, as all the other Brāhmaṇa texts, describe the conditions of the challenge, the social and ritual set-up, and the dire consequences. It is, therefore, worth to be quoted extensively:⁵⁷

"Sudakṣina Kṣaimi, Prācīnaśāli and the two Jābāla (brothers) were fellow Veda students. They repeated (after their teacher, = recited) much of what is to be mumbled (in Yajurveda ritual) and of other (Rgvedic, Sāmavedic texts). Now S. K. used to ask (them and their teacher), that what is quickly (understood), what is well known. They, being distracted (in study), ran about, crying out: "The Śūdra (i.e. S. K.) is one who is not learned!" [Oertel: "we don't know"]. Thus, both Prācīnaśāli and the two Jābālis, used to cry out (*vyākruś*) about S. K. - S. K. used to say: "Where the best Kuru-Pāñcālas have come together, at that (place) shall be our discussion (*samvāda*)! Let us not discuss (*sam.vad*) without a spectator (*an-upadrāṣṭṛ*), like Śūdras!"⁵⁸

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56. Cf. also the observation of Falk, Würfelspiel, p. 37 sqq.: There are some references to cannibalism at TS 7.2.10, KS 34.11.
57. I thank H. Falk, who has read the Paris draft of this paper, for pointing out this passage to me.
58. Cf. above on *upadrāṣṭṛ*; apparently there were many spectators, just as they are attending solemn *yajñas* and *pūjās* today; but in Vedic times they came to disturb, "creeping up" to ask questions (cf. Falk, Würfelspiel, p. 34); only the 11th day was *avivākyā* "without disputation". - Note that open discussion in public is a point of honour ("śūdras do not act like this")! - For *samvāda* cf. Falk, Würfelspiel, p. 189, ann. 554; ApGS 22,19; Heesterman, Kauṭalya, WZKS XV, 1971, p. 16 sqq. - For a ritual discussion between the Kurus and Pāñcālas, see JB 1.262, Caland § 87, Oertel KZ 58, p. 81.

The two Jābālas, Śukra and Gośru, consecrated themselves. Prācīnaśāli was chosen as Udgātar by the two.⁵⁹ Sudakṣina got to know this: 'The two Jābālas have consecrated themselves.' He told his chariot driver: "Hey (are!), come! (*ānayasva*). The two Jābālas have consecrated themselves. We will go there!"

His relatives were, by and large (*iva*), in tears: "This one (just now) went to one (of his two, or three possible lots) [*diṣṭam?*]!"⁶⁰ Now, one used to think of someone who formerly 'spoke a brahmavāḍya' (took part in a ritual discussion), 'he went to' (his death: cf. *pra.i*, *preta*-). Now, they used to serve him like one who really was (more or less) dead.⁶¹

The driver said to him (S. K.): "Now, Sir, as there is nothing pleasant for you by these two, (they treat you badly), why do you speak thus (why do you say you want to go?)" (S. K. said): "*Om* (so be it, yes)! I have to go. The teacher had thought them easily tameable."⁶² He mounted the chariot and made (his driver) drive off.⁶³ They (the priests, Prācīnaśāli, the two Jābālas, etc.) saw him. "Do you know him?" (the other Satrins asked), - "(It is) Sudakṣina" (the Jābālas) answered. - "He must not get down here now (and sit down here, on the offering ground, *idam*, i.e. to

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59. Note the same situation in KB, see Ved.Ind. s.v. Jābāla, Citra Gauśrā-yani. Here it is Citra who comes from the North of the offering ground and helps out in the discussion. - Gauśla also occurs as an interlocutor at a Viśvajit rite, AB 6.30.
60. For the meaning of *iva* see now: Bereton, JAOS 102, 1982, p. 443-450. - It is not known at this instance whether there was an idea of pre-destined (*diṣṭam*) span of life (*āyus*) in Vedic times, but see Oertel, KZ 58, 1942, p. 154: He can adduce only AV 3.11.8; cf. however RV 10.59.4 *dyūbhīr hitō jarimā*, cf. comm. of Geldner with parallels from MS, KS; cf. also *dēṣṭri* 'fate' at RV 10.85.47; for *diṣṭam* 'fate' cf. also Pāli *dittihia* < *diṣṭyā* "thank god!" see O. v. Hinüber, Das ältere Mittelindisch im Überblick, Wien 1986, p. 151 § 339. - Note, however, the case form of *anyatarām* (acc.sing.f., acc.pl.m.?).
61. Cf. Oertel on *pra-i*: Euphemismen, SB Bayr.Akad., München 1942, Heft 8, p. 9-13.
62. At JB 1.285, Āruṇi is the teacher of Samgamana (!) Kṣaimi.; - note that *om* = 'yes', also at JB 2.77 (Vidagdha Sākalya), AB 7.18 (Hariś-candra). - Note that S.Ks. already answers, as if already taking part in ritual, not with *tathā* 'yes', but with *om* 'yes'.
63. For the meaning of (*pra.)dhab*, cf. Bodewitz, IIJ 16, p. 93; note, however, besides "driving around/towards a goal", actually "making one's driver drive towards ...", the special meaning "to drive towards a discussion" is obvious in some texts, cf. ŚB 11.6.2.4; JUB 3.2.4.8; at 3.2.3.5 a king leaves for a *samiti* JB 1.234 § 87.

question us)! - "It is only him."⁶⁴ He (S. K.), having stepped down from the steps (of the chariot?) in(to) the offering ground (*antarvedi*), said: "Well now, thus! ... O Gr̥hapati ... (leader of the Satrins)?!" He (J.) did not wish to get up after him (S.K., although having been challenged).⁶⁵ He (S.K.) said: "Be one who will get up after me! You are one who wears the black antelope skin."⁶⁶

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- 64. He is, however, not as stupid as the two suppose him to be: see JB 1.285 where S.Ks. puts an intelligent question to Satyayajña Pauluṣi which the latter cannot answer; cf. Oertel KZ 58, p. 81.
 - 65. PW col. 1304: *anu.ut. sthā* 'to get up after someone', as for example in ritual ĀśvSS 4.10.7; - but contrast BĀU 3.8.2 Gārgī: *upa.ut.sthā* 'to charge someone (with questions)'. Cf. ann. 67.
 - 66. Apparently the same situation, with reversed roles, is found at ŚB 11.8.4: Keśin's *samrāj* cow was killed by a tiger during his *Sattra*. He went to Khaṇḍika Audbhāri who knew the atonement but who also was his enemy. Keśin knew this, and said "If you will have me die, I shall be torn apart along with the sacrifice that is torn apart." (*yády u ma mariṣyási, yaññám vikṛṣṭam ánu vikrakṣya iti*; note the wording, similar to the one about the "shattered head") - Kh. seeing him coming said: "As there are those skins on deer, we break their ribs and cook (them, the deer). Have you dared to drive up to me, (thinking) 'The skin of the, black antelope is attached to my (Kh.'s) neck'?" (*yán nv etány evājñāni mr̥gēṣu bhāvany, áthaiṣām pr̥stir̥ apiśiry, pacāmahe. kr̥snājinām me gr̥ivāsv ābaddham t̥ty evá medām adhṛṣo 'bhyāvasyantūm t̥ti*). Kh. then told him the atonement, knowing that Keśin would be successful on this earth and that he, Kh. would die (apparently during his own sacrifice: he wears the antelope skin) and have "more nights up there" in heaven. - Kh. thinks that K. challenges him at his own sacrifice, and "wants his head", wants him killed and "cooked" (Cf., on eating human flesh during a *sattra*, Falk, Bruderschaft, p. 37, cf. above, ann. 56). Wearing the antelope skin makes the wearer equal to an animal which can be hunted and eaten! - In the passage under discussion (JUB), it is the challenger, S. Ks., who wears an antelope skin (either because he still is a *brahmacārin*, or, more likely, as he has prepared himself for ritual, (note his "sacred speech": his answering with *om̄*); the Gr̥hapati (Jābāla) and the other Brahmins taking part in the *Sattra* wear black dresses and in addition, skins (perhaps sheep skins, see Falk, Bruderschaft p. 20 sq.).

The Kuru-Pañcalas knew this; they said: "He (J.) is one who will get up after you (S.K.)." The younger brother (of the two Jābālas) told him (J.): "Get up, Sir, only after the Udgātar (Prācīnaśāli)!" He (J.) got up after him (Prācīnaśāli).⁶⁷ He said: "Three times, o 'householder', man is born ... [etc., on the efficacy of the Udgātar to help beyond the death thrice]."⁶⁸ Having said this much, he mounted (his) chariot and made (his driver) drive off (having overcome Prācīnaśāli, the Udgātar).

To the (elder) Jābāla who had come back (from the discussion),⁶⁹ the younger brother said: "Which speech, Sir, has the little Śūdra spoken (just now)?" - "You have sought a ford with an elephant" (i.e.: You made an elephant out of a molehill). To him who had said "what speech, Sir, has he spoken?" the (older brother) declared: He who knows the driving across the three deaths by means of a Sāman, is the Udgātar. He drives across death." He said: "Your father indeed had thought of him (S.K., *amanvaya*) as an Udgātar!"⁷⁰

The Prācīnaśāla knew which of them was the one chosen as an Udgātar here (at this sacrifice, i.e. now S.K. and no longer Prācīnaśāli). They did not agree with this. They said: "Run after Kāṇḍviya!" They ran after him. They made Kāṇḍviya the Udgātar and Prācīnaśāli the Brahman priest.⁷¹

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- 67. Apparently, to get up "after someone" means to challenge someone, to answer questions in a *brahmodya*. The challenger and the challenged who already was present on the offering ground (*antarvedi*) seem to go to another part of the sacrificial area, apparently in the North. This is another term which has to be studied in detail, cf. ann. 16 and JUB 3.2.1, JB 1.337-338 § 115.
 - 68. Apparently, he gets no answer; for getting up cf. also AB 8.28 (end): not getting up before the enemy, in a different situation, though. Cf. getting up as a sign of politeness, TU 1.11, KaṭhŚiU 11, at WZKS 23, p. 28 and 24, p. 66.
 - 69. From where did he come back? Or does the *vivākya* take place elsewhere? See ann. 67. - For the address 'Śūdra' cf. Chu 4.2.3 (Janaśruta, apparently the king of the North-Western Mahāvṛṣa land, is addressed thus by Raikva).
 - 70. That means: he thought him capable to be an Udgātar; the teacher mentioned here apparently could, according to JB 1.285, have been Āruṇi, - who is not a Jābāla!
 - 71. Who has to remain silent during the ritual; just like Pr., who apparently did not know an answer.

(S.K.) having looked down on him, he said: "Thus has this Brahmin not been tired of useless (*mogha*) talk. He does not seek the subtle of the *sāman*." - He did this beyond him (overcame him).⁷²"

(2. *Sudakṣino ha vai Kṣaimīḥ Prācīnaśālīr Jābālau te ha sabrahmacāriṇa āsuḥ. te heme bahu japyasya cānyasya cānūcire Prācīnaśāliś ca Jābālau ca.* 3. *atha ha sma Sudakṣīṇaḥ Kṣaimir, yad eva yajñasyāñjo yat suviditam, tad dha smaiva pṛecheati.* 5. *ta u ha vā apoditā vyākrośamānāś cerus 'Śudro duranūcāna' iti ha sma Sudakṣīṇam Kṣaimim ākrośanti Prācīnaśāliś ca Jābālau.* 6. *sa ha smāha Sudakṣīṇaḥ Kṣaimir, yatra bhūyiṣṭhāḥ Kurupañcālās samāgata bhavitāras, tan na eṣa samvādo nānupadrāṣṭre śūdra iva samvadiṣyāmaḥ iti.* 7. *ta u ha vai Jābālau dīdīkṣate, Sukraś ca Gośruś ca. tayor ha Prācīnaśālīr vṛta udgātā.* 8. *sa tad dha Sudakṣīṇa 'nububudhe: Jābālau hādīkṣate. sa ha samgrahitāram uvācānayasvāre! Jābālau hādīkṣiṣṭām; tad gamiṣyāva iti.* (3.7)

(1. *tasya ha jnātikā aśrumukhā ivāsur: anyatarām vā ayam upāgād iti.* 2. *atha ha sma vai, yaḥ purā brahmavādyām vadaty, anyatarām upāgād iti ha smainām manyante. atho ha smainām mṛtam iavaivopāsate.* 3. *taṁ he samgrahito 'vācātha yad bhagavas te tābhyaṁ na kuśalaṁ; kathettham āttheti.* 4. *om iti hovāca: gantavyam mā; ācāryas suyamān amanyateti.* 5. *sa ha ratham āsthāya, pradhāvayām cakāra. taṁ ha sma pratīkṣante.* 6. *kām jāniteti. Sudakṣīṇa iti. na vai nūnaṁ sa idam abhyaveyād iti. sa eveti.* 7. *sa ha sopānād evāntarvedy avasthāyovācāṅga nv ithām gr̥gapatā? iti. taṁ ha nānūdatisṭhāsat. sa hovācānūtthātā ma edhi. Kṛṣṇājīno 'si[t]. tad ime Kurupañcālā avidur: anūtthātaiva ta iti hocuḥ.* 8. *taṁ ha kaniyān bhrātovācānūttisṭha bhagava udgātāram! iti. taṁ hānūttasthau.* 9. *sa hovāca: trir vai gr̥hapate puruṣo jāyate ... (3.8)*

3.9.8 *etāvad dhairovktvā, ratham āsthāya, pradhāvayām cakāra.* 9. *taṁ ha Jābālām pratyetaṁ kaniyān bhrātovāca: kām bhavān chūdrako vācam avāditi. hastinā gādham aiśir iti.* 10. *pra haivainām tac chasāṁsa, yaḥ katham avocad, bhagava? iti yas trayāṇām mṛtyūnām sāmnātivahaṇi veda, sa udgātā. mṛtyum ativahatīti.* (3.9)

72. PW *ati.kṛ* 'to do something in excess', as in ritual: TS 6.6.2.1 cf. also: *paro bhū* at SB 11.6.3/JB 2.77, see above § 4.

1. *taṁ vāva, bhagavas, te pitodgātāram amanyateti hovāca. tad u ha Prācīnaśālā vidur, ya eṣām ayam vṛta udgātāsa. tasmin ha nānuviduḥ.* 2. *te hocur: anudhāvata Kāñḍviyam! iti. taṁ hānūsasruḥ. te ha Kāñḍviyam udgātāram cakrire, brāhmaṇam Prācīnaśālīm.* 3. *taṁ hābhya veṣyovācaivam eṣa brāhmaṇo moghāya vādāya nāglāyat. sa nānu sāmno 'nvicchatīti. ati haivanaṁ tac cakre* (3.10))

The role that personal prestige played in the Brahmanical society becomes quite evident in this passage: one has to react to an open challenge, if that is pronounced in public. Not to accept it means to be like a śūdra, to be lesser than the three twice-born castes; śūdras do not dispute publicly in a formal way. To lose or to win in such a public discussion has an immediate effect on one's standing in the community of the Twice-born castes. - The passage also stresses the risks one undergoes when taking part in a ritual discussion: one is regarded already as more or less 'dead', that is at least liable to die or to be put to death; or one was, until very recently, supposed to have been put at this risk. Therefore, one's relatives "formerly" used to cry when one went to such a discussion. One virtually risks one's head when going ('driving off') to a *brahmodya*.

In addition, such passages indicate that the situation of challenge persisted in or still was closely connected with ritual, even in such comparatively late texts like the VādhB and JUB.

Both the Śākalya legend and the Soma story (see above, § 2: SB 3.6.1. 23) look like a *satyakriyā*, like wagering on part of the participants of a discussion viz. of a ritual. The custom of wagering one's head during a discussion lasted for much longer, in fact well into the first millennium A.D.; this can be gathered, for example, from a statement about Hsuan Tsang. He spared the life of a Brahmin who had staked his head in a discussion with him, but then kept him as a servant.⁷³

73. See: Hui-li, The Life of Hiuen-tsiang, transl. by Samuel Beal, New Delhi 1973, p. 161-65; cf. W. Slaje, Nalanda, in: Grazer Morgenländische Studien 1, ed. H. D. Galter, Graz 1986; cf. also (ref. kindly provided by R. Thurman) the case of Dharmakīrti, as an apprentice of Kumārila, in: Tāranātha, Hist. of Buddhism, transl. by Chattopadhyaya, and also: Obermiller, Hist. of Buddh. by Bu-ston.

7. Against this background, the only reported death resulting from a disputation, the one of Śākalya, gains a new significance. It is reported both in ŚB 11.6.3, JB 2.77, and then, slightly differently, in an Upaniṣad (BĀU 3.9), a (comparatively) late text thus. The loser is no longer expected to die after a discussion or during the ritual in this late-Vedic period, just as one is not killed any more at such occasions in VādhB or JUB. However, this is exactly what is reported in all four versions of the story.

Why then is Vidagdha Śākalya killed? Why did he not die on the spot, or rather, why was he not killed immediately? The introduction to the ŚB, JB and BĀU stories tell that Janaka begins a "sacrifice with many gifts for the priests." The general context thus is the usual ritual one. One can therefore suppose that the loser, Vidagdha, would be killed and, that, perhaps, his head would be used in the ritual. Nothing of this is said, however, while on the other hand, VādhB, a comparatively late Anubrāhmaṇa and even the earlier ŚB, still speak of the heads of the give sacrificial animals (including man). Yet Śākalya's bones are found in the wilderness (or are they robbed from a caravan?) Have they been cast away intentionally, just as Yājñavalkya's threat implied: 'Not even your bones will reach home' (for a proper burial?). Did Vidagdha die of fear, was he indeed killed? Why did the robbers take his bones for something else?⁷⁴

In the present case, I think, we will have to reckon with another factor, – that of literary composition and of legend forming.⁷⁵ First of

74. Note that in the Vedic period described by Middle and Late Vedic texts, the burial of the ashes and bones took place, after cremation, in a low, square *caitya*, according to the classical Vedic *śrauta/grhya* form and not in a round *caitya* which is described by ŚB 13.8.1.5 as eastern and '*asurya*'; note the burial in effigie of people who have disappeared or have died in a foreign land, BaudhPiS, 3,7-8, cf. Śrautakośa, Engl. tr. p. 1117 sq.; for the ritual of cremation and burial, see Caland, Todtencult, § 40 § 91, sqq., esp. § 77 and 112; for a dead body lying on a *śmaśāna* cremation ground, half devoured by animals, see Chāg.Up. 2.

75. This has, to some textent, been taken into account by Fišer; however, he simply dismisses (p. 78-81) the whole story and its interesting details as being "of little value and credibility [with regard to Yājñavalkya as an actual historical person] ... legend forming is already in full bloom; ... [it is written in] unusually pompous style, ... an unfortunate mixture of the *brāhmaṇa* element [ŚB 11, discussion] and the Upaniṣadic curse [Satyakriyā]", – with a curious misunderstanding of the *satyakriyā* type of curse as a late development. But note already the use of a *satyakriyā* in RV 3.33 (crossing rivers), or cf. AV 2.2 = PS 1.7 (used when playing dice, cf. with Kāṭha 1.101).

all, Yājñavalkya was, according to all accounts, an extraordinary person, as is obvious from the – comparatively – lively accounts in ŚB and also in JB, VādhB. Even if not all the quotations attributed to him are genuine, he was taught, at least by the compilers of ŚB, to have been a remarkable personality.⁷⁶

According to the texts, he was not only a ritualist but also an Upaniṣad thinker.⁷⁷ One of his characteristics, not treated extensively in

76. The final compilation of ŚB, made up of several independent portions, is probably a comparatively late one; yet the compiler was able still to put cross-references into the Vedic text: cf. the case of the Pra-vargya legend in ŚB (see author, on frame stories, in Festschrift U. Schneider): the compilator still knew Vedic well enough to produce such sentences referring forwards and backwards in the text. On the other hand: the compiler was different from the (much later) redactor who seems to have lived many generations after Yājñavalkya, even according to the various Vaṃśas found in ŚB and BĀU. I suspect that he was a contemporary of the Kāṇva dynasty or the Satavāhana dynasty. (This problem will have to be treated separately). It is only the redactor that was responsible for glorification of Yājñavalkya and for his authorship of the White IV; note that this information is added as the very last words of ŚB, – though still with Vedic accents (!, cf. ann. 97); note that the redactor already describes Janaka as presenting land to Yājñavalkya (see ann. 97, 100 but cf. ŚB 13.2.4.2-4: boundaries of villages (*grāma*) ideally are contiguous). Yet even the Satakarṇi inscription, 2nd cent. A.D., (see ann. 82) still mentions only presents of cows given as *dakṣiṇā* to Brahmins, and not a donation of land; cf. however, W. Rau, Staat und Ges., p. 58 sq.

77. For the person of Yājñavalkya see now: I. Fišer, AO 45, 1984. – (Cf. also Ruben, ZDMG 83, cf. ann. 8.) Actually, several others that I know of (F. Sprockhoff, J. Bronkhorst, myself) also wanted, in the early Eighties, to study the person of Yājñavalkya, but having heard about Fišer's article, then planned, refrained from doing so. – I may, however, mention two points here which seem to be of importance to me: A close study of portions of the texts ascribed to Y. reveals, as for example in BĀU 4.3, that the author of this short text is very innovative in his language: he coins many new words not found before him and often not found even in later literature. I investigated this when T. Vetter and I jointly conducted a seminar on Upaniṣads at Leiden, in 1978/79. The results of this will be published later. – I. Fišer misunderstands the hapax problem: Comparatively infrequent attestation of a particular word of course does not mean that the passage in question is necessarily late! – The question "One or two Yājñavalkyas?" is not treated here (cf. Horsch, Gāthā- u. Śloka-Lit., p. 474). Both the witty ritualist of the Br. portions and the thinker/mystic of the Up.s seem (to me) to reflect a single, extraordinary personality. However, only a thorough comparison of the use of language in both the ŚB and BĀU passages ascribed to Y. can decide the question.

secondary literature, (with the recent exception of I. Fišer), is his wit: he usually will give an unexpected, quick and undefeatable answer, such as the one to the Carakādhvaryu who told him not to perform a sacrifice in this or that way - otherwise his breaths would desert the body. Yājñavalkya, who had followed the other procedure all his life, just pointed to his gray-haired arms saying "these old arms - what in the world has become of that Brahmin's words!" (ŚB 3.8.2.24 sq.)

In the ŚB (11) and the JB variant of the Śākalya legend, he again shows his wit by the ploy of not giving a direct answer to the question asking whether he indeed is the most learned Brahmin: He simply says: *na-mo'stu brahmaśthāya! go-kāmā eva vayam sma.* "Reverence of the most learned one! We are only after cows," (ŚB, JB 2.76). What follows then is a simple questioning in two parts: the first one ending with Yājñavalkya's answer that there really is only one god, to which Śākalya agrees; the second part provides their identifications: the one god is "breath". Śākalya should have stopped before asking this last question and should have been content with the answer: "1-1/2 gods = Vāyu".

This simple narrative scheme has been elaborated in BĀU 3.1-9 (ŚBM 14.6), as has been noted already by Deussen. It starts with the same introduction, be it somewhat more elaborate, but then, the Up. version inserts 8 questions by 7 other persons: Aśvala, Ārtabhadra, Bhujyu, Uṣasta, Kahola, Gārgī, Uddālaka, and again, Gārgī. Of these, the stories of Bhujyu and Uddālaka are two slightly different versions of the same frame story, both with Western dialect characteristics that are unusual for BĀU (cf. StII 7, p. 114). The double questioning by Gārgī and the confusion in Śākalya's questioning are also remarkable: The passage clearly is a patchwork, as has already been pointed out by Deussen.⁷⁸

These preliminary observations on the structure of the BĀU version of the legend can be supplemented by others: The last sentences in BĀU have been remodelled into memorative verses, a clear sign of later redaction.⁷⁹ The grammatically wrong form *mā vyapaptad* instead of *mā *vipaptad*⁸⁰ is

78. Cf. also Oldenberg, Die Lehre der Upanischaden u. die Anfänge des Buddhismus, Göttingen 1923, p. 133, and I. Fišer, AO 45.

79. This has already been noticed by Deussen, 60 Up.s; cf. also the translation of Hume, The 13 Principal Up.s, repr. London 1971.

80. Or did one make a wrong dissolution of Sandhi: *mā+paptad* < *māpaptad*?

matched by a similar mistaken use of the moods in combination with *mā* in comparatively late texts.⁸¹ Here, the situation asks for an imperative or rather, a prohibitive statement to be expressed by an injunctive; the form of the verb, however, seems to have been influenced by the parallel passages which have: *na ... vyapatiṣyat* (see above, § 1: TB 3.10.9.5, ChU 1.3.14, 5.18, GB 1.3.14). The very occurrence of, or the possibility for making such a fundamental mistake again is a sign of the redactors's shaky grammatical knowledge. He probably already spoke a form of post-Vedic Sanskrit and Prākṛt.⁸²

Otherwise, the form *vyapaptat* seems to belong to a group of cases in late Vedic where the use of the augment deviates from normal Vedic:

- Such as impf. used as a kind of plupft. in ŚB, see Caland, ŚBK, introd.⁸³
- Or ChU *vyapatiṣyat* colloquial "would have burst" instead of "would burst" (cf. Hoffmann, Aufs. p. 370); here it merely seems to indicate an action taking place earlier than another.⁸⁴

81. See K. Hoffmann, Injunktiv, p. 94-98; note the similar case *mā ... atyagād* he adduces from Mbhār. 3.269.22 (N.B. also found at Rām. 1.71.1308*); he underlines the frequency of augment after the preverb *vi*, which could have resulted in a habitual use of augment in such situations; see also the "augmented aorists + *mā*" and other "remarkable augmented forms" (all after *vy*, *abhy*-!) at: van Daalen, Valmīki's Sanskrit, Leiden 1980, p. 83 (and compare further the augmentless imperfects of Rām.); cf. O. v. Hinüber, Notes on the preterite, MSS 36, 1977, p. 41, with materials on Epic and Pāli.

82. For the period of the redactor of the Up., note: the teachers' names in the Vāṁśas ending in *-i-putra*; such names do not occur in earlier Vedic texts but can be compared to the Pāli name of Ajātaśatru: Ajātasattu Vedehīputta at DN 2.1, etc. (for the date of the Pāli sources, compilation in the 3rd cent. B.C., writing down during the period 89-77 B.C., see O. v. Hinüber, Das ältere Mittelindisch im Überblick, p. 30); cf. also: J. A. van Velze, The names of persons in early Skt. lit., Diss. Utrecht 1938. Cf. also Horsch, As. Stud. 18-19, 227-246.

83. Cf. now, author, Festschrift U. Schneider, Freiburg 1987.

84. Cf. also those hypothetical statements in JB, noted by Oertel, where the first part of the sentence is missing: JB 1.234, 1.285 and 3.156 *yat pratyavakṣyat*, 1, 262 *yat pratyavakṣyan*, see Oertel, KZ 58, 1942, p. 80 sqq. - Cf. finally also the use of the Opt. as preterite in Middle Indian in non *-e-* formations of the Optative; see O. v. Hinüber, e pret., MSS 36, p. 40 sq., and the same, Überblick, p. 181 sq., 193; cf. in general also Bechert, Über den Gebrauch der indikativen Tempora im Pāli, MSS 3, 1958, 55 sqq.

- One can now also add, in my view, the tendency of the diaskeuasists and of the Padapāṭhakāra, Śākalya, (see Hoffmann, *Injunktiv* p. 149 sq.) to "reconstruct" RV injunctives as pseudo-aorists, supplying them with an augment that had no business there. While the diaskeuasis was a long process, Śākalya lived, as will be seen immediately, during the late Brāhmaṇa period: He will have regarded the augment as an indication of past or pluperfect that had to be restored in the interpretation of RV verb forms.

Finally, the list of the persons that question Yajñavalkya in the BĀU version is of great interest:

1. AŚVALA, the *hotṛ* of King Janaka.

- (2. Jāratkārava Ārtabhäga)
- (3. Bhujyu Lāhyāyani: he travels in Madra)
- (4. Uṣasta Cākrāyana)

5. Kahola KAUṢITAKEYA

- (6. Gārgī Vācaknavī: he travels in Madra)

7. Uddälaka Āruṇi

- (8. Gargī Vācaknavī)

9. Vidagdha ŚĀKALYA

The discussants, numbered 1, 5, 9 above, are of special interest as they all reflect names of R̥gvedic schools:

(1) Aśvala represents the Āśvalāyana school (Aitareya-Br., Ār., and Āśvalāyana-Śrautasūtra); note that Āśvalāyana is the reputed author of AĀ 4 (while Śaunaka is the one of AĀ 5, see Keith, tr. AĀ, p. 19 sq.).

(4) Kahola Kauṣitaki is the reputed author of texts of another RV school, namely the Kauṣitaki Br., Ār. (and ŚSS,)⁸⁵

(7) The famous Uddälaka Āruṇi is often reported to be a Kuru-Pañcāla Brahmin, and to have travelled in the Madra land (Panjab). He stems from the territory lying to the West of Videha, the home of the Vājasaneyi school, to which BĀU belongs.

85. Cf. BSS 2.3 on the choosing of the priests: the Sadasya should be a Kauṣitaka (*gotra*) Brahmin. The question is whether, at this comparatively early time, this refers to a *gotra* only, or whether a Vedic school (*śākhā*) was named after a particularly prominent *gotra*.

(6/8) Gārgī as representative of womanhood needs a special treatment. Her name makes her a member of the Gārga clan: While Garga is not mentioned before the Sūtras (AŚS, ŚŚS, KŚS), his descendants, the *Gārgāḥ Prāvareyāḥ* occur, with other ancient ritualistic authorities, already at KS 13.12 (see STII 10, p. 232). Gārgī therefore seems to represent the (originally) more Western schools like the one to which Uddälaka belonged.⁸⁶

These representatives of rival Vedic schools have been portrayed as opposing Yajñavalkya of the Vājasaneyi school quite futilely. (Note that his name sometimes is Vājasaneyā, as in JB and VādhB). In the list of opponents, the heavy stress on the R̥gveda schools surprises. One could equally have expected Sāmavedic and other Yajurvedic śākhās. However, the threefold occurrence of the R̥gvedic schools seems to have a purpose.⁸⁷

This can be best understood when studying the mentioning of Uddälaka, a famous representative of the rival YV school of the more Western peoples, the Kuru-Pañcāla. He is quite prominent, and even occurs as a teacher of Yajñavalkya in ŚB, but he also appears, in the texts of Sāmavedic priests who composed the Chāndogya-Upaniṣad, as someone who is made to concede victory in a discussion to other Brahmins and to a certain *yajamāna*, apparently a *kṣatriya*.⁸⁸ In the present text he is shown as being less sophisticated in discussion than Yajñavalkya.

As far as the R̥gvedins of the list given above are concerned, it should be pointed out that ŚB seems to know a RV different from the Śākalya version, which is the only one that has survived to this day. For example, ŚB reports in the Purūravas legend that the Purūravas hymn (EV 10.95) has 15 verses. However the vulgate (the Śākalya version) has one of 18 verses. Śākalya, the "clever one" (*vidagdha!*) will have been opposed to this Easter

86. Note that there were many authorities on ritual in this family, see McDonnel-Keith, *Ved. Ind.* I 226; cf. also s.v. Gārgī-putra, Gārgya, Gārgyāyāṇī, and see ann. 82 on names in -ī-putra.

87. It could be that the author here intends to oppose the Upaniṣads belonging to the R̥gveda, the Kauṣ.Up. in particular. It teaches the way to Brahman, cf. transl. and discussion by P. Thieme in *Wiss. Zeitschr. d. Martin-Luther-Univ. Halle*, Jg. 1, 1951/2, Heft 3, p. 19 sqq. = Kl. Schr. p. 82-99.

88. See ann. 19; note also that a similar occasion occurs at BĀU 4.1: Janaka mentions the opinions of various teachers, among them are famous Satyakāma Jābāla and Vidagdha Śākalya; all these are refuted by Yajñavalkya.

version: it is he, (or perhaps already his school, the Śākalya group of Ṛgvedins), who invented the *padapāṭha* and ordered the whole of the RV in his/their way, that means differently from the one of the Eastern Ṛgvedins.

Secondly, while the early Brāhmaṇa text of the RV, i.e. Aitareya Br. 1-5, clearly belongs to the West, to an area overlapping with or close to that of the Kāṭha school, (i.e. Eastern Panjab and W. Kurukṣetra, see author, Fel. Vol. Eggermont), the later part of AB, with *pañcikās* (!) 6-8, knows about all of Northern Indian but is more familiar with the East and the South-East (even the area SE of the Vindhya, inhabited by "foreign" people (*dasyu*) like the Puṇḍra, Śabara, Pulinda, Mūtiba, up to Andhra, AB 7.18).⁸⁹ Some features of the language of AB 6-8 indicate as well,⁹⁰ that there must have been a (sudden) movement of the Aitareyins towards the East, to the Videha, and perhaps, Magadha countries. This will have meant a strong rivalry between them, the representatives of the Kuru-Pañcāla "orthodoxy" and śrauta orthopraxy on one hand, and the predominant school of the East, the White YV (Vājasaneyin) on the other.⁹¹

ĀU indicates this: Aśvala already functions as the Hotṛ of king Jana-ka; i.e. he has an important position at the court. This is also reflected in the later part of AB itself: While *pañcikās* 1-5 deal almost exclusively with the Soma ritual, the very last part of *pañcikā* 8 (AB 8.24-28) treats the office of the Purohita of a king in detail. Note also that AB

89. The last point may be indicative of a comparatively late redaction of AB 6-8: was it made under the early Magadha kingdom which had closer ties with the iron producing tribes of Chhota Nagpur? - A Magadha kingdom is nowhere mentioned in the Vedic texts, and it is only in KA (ŚA) that a *magadhavāsin brāhmaṇa* occurs. The Pāli texts, however, know of large Brahmin settlements in Magadha and Āṅga. - It may very well be the case that the Vedic texts intentionally do not mention the Kingdom of Magadha (note also the opposition of the Mbhār. towards Jarāsandha of Magadha), as this was, after all, an area where Brahmins were not supposed to venture without the fear of losing their (ritual) purity; cf. R. Salomon, on the injunction against crossing the Karmānāśa River, the Western boundary of ancient Magadha, Ady. Libr. Bull. 42, 1978, p. 31-60.

90. See author, in the proceedings of the Paris dialect conf. of Sept. 1986, to be edited by C. Caillat.

91. Nowadays, the YV usually is strongest in number among the various Vedas, and followed by RV and only then by SV; the AV comes last, with very few adherants. But in Yājñavalkya's time, the Aitareyins may have meant a serious threat; note their importance in royal ritual at AB 7-8.

7.13-23 is a very detailed and long treatment of the Rājasūya and allied royal rituals (which in the parallel school of the Kausītakis were only incorporated into a later text, the ŚSS). The coming of the Aitareyins to the East set off an innovative trend, quite similar to the one instituted by the introduction of the Śāndilya texts ŚB 6-10, and that of the Kāṇvas (ŚBK), from the West. Unfortunately we do not know the exact time of these movements. They all must have taken place in the late Brāhmaṇa period.

In any case, already the authors and collectors of the JB and ŚB 11 (which contain the Śākalya story), and later on also the redactor of ŚB and BĀU, must have intended to show the Ṛgvedins in a subordinate, if not a defeated position, as to contrast this with their own, extra-ordinary champion, Yājñavalkya. He is, after all, regarded as the traditional "author" of the White YV; see the last sentence of the Vāṁśa at the end of ŚB and BĀU.⁹² If thus, the hand of the authors/collectors of ŚB 11 and JB was strongly involved in the formulation of the story, one can now ask the question: Is Śākalya's very name "Vidagdha" perhaps a double entendre, a śleṣa? Vidagdha means, at the same time, "clever" (attested in Mbh.), but also "burnt up, cremated" (ŚB), or "decomposed ...". To use this name may have been an indication, a warning of what would become of Śākalya already in the ŚB 11/JB story.

The detrimental outcome is intentionally underlined in the later, i.e. the BĀU, version of the story, and it therefore was conceived already by the redactor of BĀU. This is also evident from the twofold insertion of the questioning by Gārgī (BĀU 3.6 and 3.8): She warns Vidagdha and the others, if Yājñavalkya could answer her two questions (BĀU 3.8.1) then certainly nobody would be able to overcome him in a discussion. And again, at the end of the discussion, BĀU 3.8.12, she says: "Brahmins, you must think highly of yourselves if you can get away from him by merely showing him your obeisance. Certainly, nobody of you will be able to conquer him in discussion."

92. Cf. I. Fišer in AO 45, 1984; acc. to the Purāṇas, Śākalya swallowed the Veda which Yājñavalkya had spit out again; this legend is comparable to the Tittiri story found only in the S. Indian "Chārdi-Br." (of the Vaikhānasa school); the text was noticed by Caland, and actually is present in the Utrecht Univ. Library but has remained untreated so far.) Such legends apparently have their origin in the tradition on Vidagdha Śākalya.

The redactor of BĀU succeeded in making his point by unusual means: It is a woman, Gārgī, who is better than all the other Brahmin men that took part earlier in the discussion. Just as by the introduction into some Upaniṣads of Kṣatriyas and kings who occasionally know more about a particular ritual or philosophical topic than all the Brahmins, the eminent position of Gārgī again underlines the still more extra-ordinary position of Yājñavalkya. Her eminence is recognised by Yājñavalkya himself who, among all the other discussants, warns only her not to overask: The others had given up much earlier in the contest ...⁹³

Everything therefore points to the narrational climax of Śākalya's persistent questions and to his subsequent defeat, in spite of Yājñavalkya's warning. In short, Śākalya's death in BĀU is clearly intended as a climax, while in the older version (ŚB 11.6.3, JB 2.76-77), it is simply reported, like some of the other statements about 'shattered heads' in the Brāhmaṇas (see above, VādhB 3.94, JB 2.203 sq., JUB 3.7-3. 11).⁹⁴

Differently from such legends, however, all the Śākalya stories, as told in the BĀU and ŚB, JB versions, set a date: Before the day "x", Śākalya will automatically die, most probably before the actual beginning of the sacrifice which Janaka is about to offer. The discussion among the contestants probably was intended by Janaka as a preliminary to his choosing the priests (*r̥tvigvarāṇa*) for the ritual he was going to undertake. The loser's, i.e. Śākalya's head might have been used for the ritual. His body, however, would then have been useless and therefore will have been cast away (as to fit Yājñavalkya's threat); apparently it was devoured by wild animals: Robbers find only his bones and taken them not knowing that these are bones of someone brought to death.⁹⁵

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93. The other persons next to Gārgī are, with the exception of the R̥gvedins and Uddālaka, not very prominent in the extant Vedic literature: Ārtabhaṅga, etc.
94. This outcome of a discussion is threatened to Yājñavalkya himself at BĀU 3.7.1 = ŚBM 14.6.7.1.
95. Cf. also the words of Urvaśi to Purūravas: "Do not die! Do not throw yourself (into a ravine: *mā prapaptah!*), may the hostile wolves not devour you!" RV 10.95.15. For suicide in ancient India, see now: P.-A. Berglie and C. Suneson, Arhatschaft und Selbstmord, in: *Kalyāṇamitrārāgaṇam*, ed. by E. Kahrs, Oxford (NPU/OPU) 1986, p. 13 sqq. cf. also RV 10.67.5 – Fišer thinks Śākalya's bones had been put into an urn and then had been mistaken for treasures. This is also the later inter-

What is significant in all of this material, is this: We have got here a late Brāhmaṇa legend, sustained by many similar, even late accounts, of a *brāhmodya*, a "theological" discussion, where one's head was at stake. Similarly, in certain ritual situations, one was apt to lose one's head – if one did not know the correct procedures. By the time of the early Upaniṣads and their (probably somewhat later) collection, or that of the much later redaction of the Pāli texts, all of this is still remembered vividly; it was, perhaps, rarely actually practised, but was certainly surviving as just another ritual "fossile"; and it therefore was frequently used as a threat in ritual and 'theological' discussion.⁹⁶

pretation made by the commentaries; the prophecy, however, simply was: 'Even your bones will not reach home ...'. How the bodies of decapitated victims were treated by white YV priests is described by Heesterman, WZKS XI, p. 33, ann. 41 a (i.e. throwing them away).

96. I am not of the opinion that the early Upaniṣads like BĀU, ChU are necessarily contemporary with or even later than the Buddha. The Pāli texts clearly indicate a much later and much more developed society, with towns and with Brahmins prominently settled even in Magadha and Aṅga. – This was either not the case yet at the time of the Vedic texts, or such passages were, (as far as towns are concerned), intentionally excluded from the texts. Towns were densely settled, and mostly by non-Brahmin/Kṣatriya groups; they represent a ritually undesirable and imperfect type of settlement. – On the other hand, there may be passages even in the early Up.s, – like the composite story of Vidagdha Śākalya in BĀU, – which are of a later date. However, this is a topic that will have to be approached by a careful study of the language of the texts, passage by passage, and by a careful comparison of their contents and cultural setting with that of the Pāli texts. Sweeping statements and superficial comparisons of two or three unrelated facts (Bronkhorst, Two traditions, on Śvetaketu, Stuttgart 1986) are misleading.

To use, as an argument for chronology, e.g. the Vedic accents ("chandas" type language) referred to in Buddh. texts is besides the point, as accented texts were composed even much later than the (supposed) lifetime of the Buddha, see e.g. (almost unknown) Vaiśṇava hymns of the VaikhMp., or even the last sentences of ŚB, cf. ann. 76. – On the other hand, Kātyāyana (ca. 300 B.C.), Vārtt., already did not know the accents of Pāṇini's original grammar, and had to infer them and to indicate them artificially (e.g. *ādy-udāttā*): this can be due to the break in tradition, but also to the distance of the North-Western home land of Pāṇini and the Eastern one of Kāty., who most probably had 2 tones only in his local form of Vedic Sanskrit: in the so-called *bhāṣika* accent of ŚB, see above ann. 76.

8. Summing up the evidence presented here it can be said that asking too far, beyond the limits of one's own knowledge, and inquiring into something one is not allowed to ask (*anatipraśnya*), necessarily leads to one's destruction.

Secondly, the answer given to such questions, must be the "final" solution of the problem. A partial answer is not allowed, it will lead to one's destruction just as well as not answering at all; compare for example the ChU discussion on the *sāman*: If the opponent cannot answer the final question he is warned in time (ChU 1.10.9) and is destroyed if he does not pay heed to this. One can only avoid this fate by announcing one's defeat publicly and by becoming the pupil of the opponent (ŚB 11.5.3.13, ChU 9.12.2).⁹⁷

In the Buddhist texts, a quite similar type of questioning occurs. It is called *sahadhammika*; the rules are clearly specified:⁹⁸ - one must answer at the third time the question is put (cf. M. Hara), - one must answer completely, not only partially, - if one does not/cannot answer, death is imminent. The Pāli texts indicate, perhaps more clearly than the elusive Vedic texts, that such questioning is a formal one: it takes place in a kind of open challenge or tournament, similar to the Vedic *brahmodya*. The Vedic texts sometimes stress the formal conditions as well: ChU 1.10.9 "after I had announced this to you ..." The clearest example is the JUB (3.7 sqq.) legend of Sudakṣīṇa Kṣaimi who is nicknamed 'Śūdraka' but challenges other Brahmins at a sacrifice. - An informal exchange of views does not lead to such dire results like the shattering of one's head.

The whole situation involving this threat is described in both the Buddhist as well as the Brahmanical texts in an almost identical way: A superior being, i.e., a Gandharva, viz., Rtu in JB, or a Yakkha in the Pāli texts, appears. He is sometimes seen by the questioner. When the question

97. Note that this probably is the cause for a number of statements found already in the RV: to denounce someone is regarded as a severely evil action, especially if one accuses someone as a sorcerer, e.g. RV 7.104; Indra shall kill such persons with his weapon (the *vajra*); RV 10.1.Ś.16.

98. On the *sahadhammika* question, see Franke, transl. Dīghanikāya, p. 94: "Frage, bei der es auf die Tatsachen ankommt"; cf. M. Hara, Mittabi, see ann. 36.

is not answered, the Gandharva viz. Yakkha splits, with a metal hammer (*ayaḥ-kūṭa* JB, *aya-kūṭa* DN), the head of the unfortunate person. The actual result of questioning, that is the death incurred, sometimes takes place seven (SuNi) or an unspecified number of days later (ŚB 11.6.3.11, JB 2.77-78). In most cases both the interrogation as well as its result, death, remain hypothetical (ŚB 11.4.1.9; DN 5.21, Mv.2, p. 114, SuNi 5.1.8). The threat alone suffices in most cases to deter from the actual confrontation.

It remains to be asked: Why is it that even a formal questioning, viz. a speech contest holds such dire consequences for an unsuccessful participant?⁹⁹

In preparing the way for an answer, it must be observed that the Vedic examples all deal with knowledge which is 'secret' in one way or another; it may be known only to an eminent person, a teacher who will not pass it on readily even when he is questioned; or it is known to a class of ritual specialists who will not share their esoteric knowledge with rival groups. Such a case is described in ŚB 13.6.1.23 where lack of knowledge about the true nature of the *sadas* shed leads to the death of someone entering it unwittingly. Finally, wrong procedure during the Aśvamedha automatically results in the splitting of one's head (or, at least in being robbed by the Kṣatriyas taking part in the ritual, VādhB 3.79, p. 186). Under such circumstances, even an unwittingly wrong action, or an unsuspecting question automatically leads to one's death.

This resembles very much the well known "automatic consequence" prevalent in Vedic magical thought: a given procedure must lead to a certain result. On the other hand, the Buddhist *saccakiriyā*, Skt. *satyakiriyā* comes to one's mind readily. If a certain truth is stated, it will automatically yield the result desired by the speaker, as could be noticed in some of the

99. The winner, on the other hand, wins fame, one (or 100, 1000, once 10.000) gold coins, and - perhaps - land (but cf. ann. 76 and 11), as seems to be given to Yājñavalkya at BAU 4.2.4, along with the servitude of Janaka and his people, or villages given by Jānaśruti to Raikva at ChU 4.2.4; cf. in Pāli, DN 4.1: a village in Āṅga, (already regarded as part of Magadha!) had been given by Bimbisāra, the father of Ajātasattu, to a Brahmin, Sōṇadaṇḍa, with all rights (pertaining, such as in later in history, typically to an *āgrahāra* village?).

Pāli texts quoted above, § 5. In the rather formal type of questioning found in the Vedic and Buddhist texts, the result is the automatic destruction of the unsuspecting, uncautious or proud challenger.

It should not be forgotten that such questioning also involved the social status of the contestants. JUB 3.7.2 sqq. expressively states that such discussions were held only among the Brahmins and Kṣatriyas (and Vaiśyas?), but not among the Śūdras. Sudakṣina Kṣaimi who apparently could ask only simple questions about the ritual is therefore nicknamed 'Śūdraka'. To challenge some Brahmin or Kṣatriya in an open assembly (of the Kuru-Pañcālas) and to win the contest means a gain in social status; to lose, a loss of face.¹⁰⁰

Apart from the discussion on ritualistic details the results of which are found, often with indications to their authors, in the Brāhmaṇas and YV Samhitās, these discussions deal, both among the Vedic *brahmavādins* as well as among the contemporaries of the Buddha, with some esoteric, secret knowledge, be it about *ātman*, *brahman* or about the *dharma* (or, simply a secret, as in the case of the origin of the clan of Ambaṭṭha which is known only to him and a few others). It is the (last) question(s) into the Ultimate which one has to avoid if one does not know the answer oneself: The question about the "ultimate deity" (*devatā*), or something irrefutable which is only known to the Buddha. As is well known, both conditions are also met with in the *saccakiriyā*: the truth stated or quoted must be unknown or irrefutable. Both the *saccakiriyā* and the *anatipraśnya* / *sahadhammika* statements deal with truth, and both do so in a formalised context: either a discussion with a challenger and one or more opponents.

This leads to a final point: given the similarity of both the *anatipraśnya* and the *sahadhammika* questions and the general rules of discussion found in the Vedic and Pāli texts, it must be asked: how old are these rules and in what contexts could such rules for discussion arise? The *anatipraśnya* question of Middle and Late Vedic texts, clearly finds its

^{100.} References to this are already met with in the RV; one wishes to have a poet which wins a discussion. See above, ann. 21.

origin on the *brahmodya* riddles put at the sacrifices. The earliest cases are to be met with already in the Rgveda (see above); later the questioning by riddles was formalised in the classical Vedic Aśvamedha sacrifice and at the Sattras (where it could take place for 10 days, until the eleventh, the *avivākya*, the "no discussion" day).¹⁰¹

These so-called riddles, however, aim at stating ultimate truths, insights about the gods, the cosmos and man's position in it. It is the "work" of the "inspired poet", (*vipra*) who had to "fashion" (*takṣ*) "new poems" about these truths, (See Geldner, HOS 36, p. 191 s.v. Neuheit, and RV 3.31.19, 10.23.6). They are formulated in such a way that they often remain enigmatic, as RV 7.87.4 itself reveals: "He who knows the track should tell (the secret 21 names of the cow, i.e. poetry,) like secrets if he wishes to serve as inspired poet to the later generation".¹⁰²

It is well known that, in the world view of the Vedic poet, only one quarter of speech was known to the uninspired men and was used in everyday language: three quarters remain hidden or secret (RV 1.164.45). Eternal truths are either told in poetic formulations (*brahman*, *manmāni* RV 7.61.2) involving 'secret' words, or they could be directly composed in riddle form. In the context of ritual, the riddle of the cut-off head of the sacrifice was one of the most important questions for the Brahmins which demanded ever-renewed answers.

^{101.} Bodewitz, IIJ 16, p. 90 ann. 17, (repeated in "Agnihotra" p. 188 ann. 2) warns "against a confusion of all kinds of *brahmodyas*, against attributing aspects to late contexts which are foreign to them and against over-sensitiveness with regard to chariots" [used in coming to and leaving from a *brahmodya*; cf. Heesterman in Pratidānam, p. 446]. He has not noticed that the "rather incidental *brahmodyas* of SB" are not fundamentally different from the "Ancient Indian Verbal Contest" of F. B. J. Kuiper, but merely their continuation, in a religious and social context that has changed. Right down from the Rgvedic period, the *brahmodyas* were common also outside the New Year ritual, as could be seen above, for example in the Sattras. - Note that even very late texts like JUB and VādhB still show clearly that (a degree of) violence was maintained until the period of the authors or until very recently before that. For riddles, see TS 2.5.8.3; ŚŚ 13.2.6.9, 13.5.2.11; 4.6.9.20; AB 5.25.22; VS 23.9-12, 45-62, and literature, at Ruben ZDMG 83, p. 247, Ann. 2.

^{102.} *vidvān padāsyā gūhyā nā vocat yugāya vīpra uparāya śtkṣan*; see C. Watkins, Aspects of Indo-European Poetics, in: The Indo-Europeans in the fourth and third millenia, ed. E. C. Polomé, Ann Arbor (Karoma) 1982, pp. 104-120.

It is here that the circle closes: sacrifice, which in the weltanschauung of the brahmins, both procudes and sustains the world (cf. RV 1.164.50 *yajñēna yajñām ayajanta devāḥ*) is not possible without violence and destruction; even the gods did not know 'the head of the sacrifice' and had to learn about it from 'outsiders', i.e. Dadhyāñc Ātharvana and the Aśvins. Only then they could succeed with their Sattra at Kurukṣetra.¹⁰³ This myth is, in my opinion, the central one of Vedic Śrauta "orthodoxy" but it has not yet received, also not in Heesterman's article on the "severed head", the attention it deserves: It serves as the justification and apology of ritual killing and at the same time, of the Brahmin's and especially the Adhvaryus' position in ritual (and society). All the five "sacrificial victims," i.e. man, horse, cow, sheep and goat could lose their lives in the ritual, until the first one or two on the list were substituted by the rest; during the late Vedic period, even the rest of the sacrificial animals was substituted by figures made of flour (*pīṭapāśu*). Their heads, however, still were necessary for the building of the Agnicayana: they have to be interred in the altar.¹⁰⁴ It is only at this late point in time that in rituals such as the Agnicayana the priests have to resort to such measures as to seek out the head of someone killed by lightning or

103. Note that normally, this results in guilt which has to be passed on, for example to Trita Āptya; similarly, it is Thraētaona Āthwyā in Avesta, Yt. 8.33 who kills the "dragon". - However, in the case of the head of Dhadhyāñc, there apparently is no guilt: It is not Dadhyāñc's head but its replacement, that of a horse (a sacrificial animal), which is cut off: the slaughter of man / demi-god is substituted by that of an animal: Note that this substitution has become the standard myth, the apology and justification of all 'classical' śrauta ritual, - a fact not noticed by the modern theoreticians of Śrauta ritual. Cf., in general, Heesterman, Brahmin and renouncer; The case of the severed head, WZKS XI, 1967, pp. 22-43. - Note also the case of the horse sacrifice in VādhB: a young pre-pubescent boy must be killed as atonement for the slaying of the horse which has spilled semen during its suffocation, see Falk, Bruderschaft, p. 160. - Guilt normally is passed on to one's neighbours, and then onwards, "to the farthest distance", see AV 5.22. PS (K) 13.1 = PS(Or) 12.1-2; BSS 2.5 (*pāpmāno vinidhyayah*).

104. See for example TS 5.1.8.1: man's head is impure without the "breaths"; it is deposited on (?) or replaced by an anthill which is pierced in 7 places just like a human head (openings of the eyes, etc.) cf. Heesterman, Severed head p. 39.

in battle. Even in the 'classical' Vedic ritual therefore, violence is not completely excluded, though the texts mostly pass it over silently or hide it by euphemistic expression.¹⁰⁵ Against this background, the loss of one's head in a ritualistic discussion is not unlikely even during the late Vedic period. In fact, VādhB expressively states that such cases were common even three or four generation before the composition of the text. On the other hand, the severed 'head of the sacrifice' is nothing but a transposition into the sphere of the sacrifice (*yajña*) of the cutting off of the head of the *puruṣa*, be it a human or the divine one.¹⁰⁶

9. The offering of the *puruṣa* has parallels in other Indo-European religions, for example in the myth of the primordial Ymir and the creation of the world on Old Norse mythology (Völuspa 3 sqq., Grimnismal 40-41) - which resembles the myth told on RV 10.90. Old Norse religion provides another parallel: that of the repeated questioning in riddle form about the origin of the world, of the gods and of man (Völuspa 21, 22, etc.; Wafthrudnismal 11 sqq.). This has, of course, been known since long, yet it acquires special importance in the present context: the very form of questioning, which is also met with in the questions of Zarathuštra put to Ahura Mazdā in Y.44, seems to reflect an old idea about ultimate truth: it is attainable only at the risk of, or - at least - at danger to one's life. Odin lost one eye in order to acquire secret knowledge (Völuspa 21-22), and Zarathuštra had to face poverty and other hardships like emigration, in the

105. Cf. the study of *ā. labh* by T. Goto and Oertel, Euphemismen, see ann. 54, Heestermann, WZKS XI.

106. The RV hints at the real procedure, in case of Vṛtra: "The head is severed from the skin", 10.172.2 *śiro 'va tvacāḥ*. One may ask whether this is not the actual procedure in all cases: Note that Vṛta is, as Benveniste and Renou have shown long ago, the mythologisation of *vṛtra*, the "resistance" of enemies (and demons); the Indo-Iranians certainly knew about a "dragon" which was to be killed (*ahī/āži*), but they did not yet call it Vṛtra. (See now C. Watkins, How to kill a dragon in Indo-European, (Studies in Memories of W. Cowgill), Berlin-New York (de Gruyter) 1987). - In later texts, the splitting of the head has been reinterpreted: ChU 8.6.6 / KU 6.16 state that the *ātman* ascends, at the time of death, by a vein from the heart to the skull/head, and then to the sun; still later (cf. Laghusannyāsa-Up. 24.1-25.2) one shatters the head of a deceased Sannyāsin and then buries him. Sannyāsins are not cremated, see Sprockhoff, Numen, 11,

course of his quest, both according to tradition and to the testimony of Y.46.¹⁰⁷

Vedic man tried to face these risks by creating poetry and, later on by ever new rituals: deep insight gained in poetic concentration or inspiration, aided by the effects of Soma, lead to metrical poetic or to formalised prose statements (*brahman*). These were subsequently arranged in sets of single and multiple identifications between items of macrocosm, microcosm and sacrifice (*yajña*), which in turn gave rise to ever-increasing strings and lists of an apparently infinite number, or to more complex, orderly structures like circles and frames, all of which are found in the YV-Samhitās and in the Brāhmaṇas.

Ultimately an immense web of cosmic and microcosmic interrelations was created that can now be found in the ad hoc discussion of the texts and that can and still has to be pieced together from the extant Brāhmaṇa portions of Vedic literature. This by its very nature open system was constantly questioned, tested, and improved upon in speech contests and challenges, as well as in friendly discussions of Brahmins (and Kṣatriyas). Ultimately, it became both the basis and model for the post-Vedic, still more formalised type of discussions and their pertinent rules. Consider, for example, the art of discussion found already in Patañjali's Mahābhāṣya (ca. 150 B.C.) with its standard *pūrvapakṣa*, *ācāryadeśīya*, and *siddhānta* setting, and compare also Caraka-Samhitā 3.8.3 and Nyāyasūtra 4.2.50.

How long and how strongly this tradition survived can be witnessed even today, for example in the discussions of contemporary *pandits* or those of Tibetan lamas, which are accompanied by quite expressive gestures, (visible for example, in the film on the examinations in Tantra of the present Dalai Lama). Or, one can compare the statement of a comparatively

1964, p. 130 sqq. - For the whole problem, see Sprockhoff, Sannyāsa, p. 62 sqq.; cf. also RV 1.181.4 *sūmakha-* "having a good *makha*-", the name of one of the Aśvins.

107. For a description and an evaluation of the state of the art with regard to Indo-European poetics, see C. Watkins, Aspects of Indo-European Poetics, in: The Indo-Europeans in the fourth and third millenia, ed. E. C. Polomé, Ann Arbor (Karoma) 1982, pp. 104-120.

late Dharmasūtra text, the Viṣṇu Smṛti, which is based on the lost Kāṭhaka Dharma-Sūtra; the passage seems to reflect the earlier tradition of loss of life but it also softens the issue, in the tradition of Hsuan Tsang and Dharmakīrti:

"If one answers improperly or the other asks improperly, that one will perish or occur hate:

(*adharmana ca yaḥ prāha yaś cādharmena pṛechnati
taylor anyataraḥ praiti vidveṣam vādhigacchati*)

Thus, in the Upaniṣad legends quoted at the outset, yet already in the Rgvedic passage 10.88.17-19 mentioned above, we witness the beginnings of the ca. three millenia of the art of discussion in India, actually recorded in ritualistic, philosophical or scientific (*śāstra*) texts in Sanskrit.